

**Jennifer Dawn Hillebrand**

## **Weaving Webs With Paul**

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**Conceptual Blending in a Reading of Romans 1:1- 5 in the context of  
the Struggle in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s**

**November 2016**

## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
PhD, in the Graduate Programme in Biblical Studies,  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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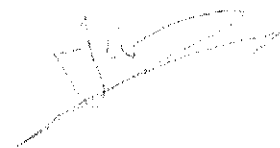
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## Contents

Chapter One: General Introduction.....	9
1.1 Something Autobiographical .....	9
1.2 The Challenge .....	10
1.3 Some Choices .....	10
1.3.1 Contexts .....	10
1.3.2 Text .....	11
1.3.3 Limits .....	12
1.4 There will be interludes .....	12
1.5 How to Weave a Web.....	13
1.6 A Road Map .....	14
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework .....	15
2.1 Introduction .....	15
2.2 Tri-polar Theory.....	15
2.3 Intercontextual Theory.....	17
2.4 Intertextual Method.....	19
2.5 Conceptual Blending .....	23
2.6 Putting it together .....	27
2.6.1 Intertextual component.....	28
2.6.2 Intercontextual/ Tri-Polar component .....	30
2.6.3 Conceptual Blending component .....	31
Chapter Three: The South African struggle era context .....	33
3.1 Introduction .....	33
3.2 Apartheid and the Afrikaner.....	35
3.2.1 What exactly was apartheid? .....	35

3.2.2	White Apartheid Theology .....	37
3.2.3	White people are the chosen race.....	39
3.2.4	Ethnic groups are decreed by God and may not be mixed .....	39
3.2.5	God is against intermarriage .....	40
3.2.6	The church is the new Israel .....	40
3.2.7	The Blood River covenant.....	41
3.2.8	D.F. Malan – One of the Architects of Apartheid .....	42
3.3	Black Consciousness .....	46
3.3.1	Black people as agents of change .....	49
3.3.2	Solidarity of black people and only black people.....	49
3.3.3	Oppression primarily due to class divisions.....	50
3.3.4	The conflict due to racial domination cannot be ignored and should be central	50
3.3.5	God is on the side of the oppressed and the marginalised .....	51
3.3.6	Desmond Mphilo Tutu – A Leader of the Struggle .....	52
3.4	The Kairos Document.....	57
3.4.1	State Theology .....	59
3.4.2	Reconciliation .....	60
3.4.3	Justice .....	61
3.4.4	Non-violence .....	62
3.4.5	Oppression.....	63
3.4.6	Tyranny .....	63
3.4.7	Hope and the Kingdom of God.....	64
3.4.8	Just me, my voice, the author .....	65
3.5	A Word about Hermeneutics .....	67
3.6	In Summary.....	69

Chapter Four – The Context into which Romans was written .....	70
4.1 Thesis Capture .....	70
4.2 Background .....	70
4.3 Exploring the Context of the Israelite.....	73
4.3.1 Jews in Rome.....	76
4.3.2 How the Romans saw the Jews .....	78
4.3.3 Heritage.....	79
4.3.4 Religion and Ritual - Torah.....	83
4.3.5 Gentiles who believed .....	87
4.3.6 Apocalyptic.....	89
4.4 The Graeco-Roman Context .....	92
4.4.1 Empires and Emperors .....	92
4.4.2 Religion .....	93
4.4.3 Social Structure – Patronage .....	96
4.4.4 Family.....	99
4.4.5 Slavery .....	102
4.4.6 Honour and Shame .....	105
4.5 In Summary.....	109
Chapter Five: Servant / Slave.....	111
5.1 Introduction .....	111
5.2 Graeco-Roman.....	113
5.2.1 Greek - Παῦλος, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.....	113
5.2.2 Roman – horizontal and vertical ranking .....	115
5.3 Hebrew .....	119
5.3.1 Old Testament – slaves in Egypt, slaves of God.....	119
5.4 My Voice – tea girls and garden boys? .....	121

5.5	African .....	123
5.5.1	Black Consciousness – own the oppression, God is with us.....	123
5.5.2	Traditional – to <i>khonza</i> and the house slave .....	125
5.5.3	Desmond Tutu – docile zombies and the God who hears .....	129
5.6	Afrikaner .....	130
5.6.1	The people – slave owners in a brutal system .....	130
5.6.2	D.F. Malan – poor whites .....	133
5.6.3	Dutch Calvinism – distinctions imposed by God.....	134
5.6.4	Racism in the world context – Ham and the curse .....	136
5.7	Servant and slave in the greater Romans context – all are slaves, even the king .....	137
5.7.1	Romans 13:4 - δῖάκ νος .....	138
5.7.2	Romans 15:8 - δῖάκ νος .....	139
5.7.3	Romans 14:4 – οἰκέτης.....	139
5.7.4	Romans 15:16 – λειτουργός.....	140
5.7.5	Romans 6 - δοῦλος .....	140
5.7.6	Romans 8 – δουλεία.....	142
5.8	An interlude of thought .....	143
5.9	Critical Analysis .....	148
5.9.1	The blend .....	148
5.9.2	The text .....	149
Chapter Six:	Called/ Apostle/ Apart .....	151
6.1	Introduction .....	151
6.2	Graeco-Roman.....	151
6.2.1	Greek - κλητὸς ἀ' ὁστολος, ἄφωρισμένος – called and sent ....	151
6.2.2	Roman – priests, philosophers and god-emperors.....	153

6.3	Hebrew .....	156
6.3.1	Old Testament – prophet and priest.....	156
6.4	African .....	159
6.4.1	Traditional – Sangomas, badimo and jogi .....	159
6.4.2	Black Consciousness – praxis first and suspicious privilege .....	161
6.4.3	Desmond Tutu – school teacher to struggle hero.....	164
6.5	Afrikaner .....	166
6.5.1	The people – God’s mission and Afrikaner culture, privilege.....	166
6.5.2	D.F. Malan – Afrikaner liberation.....	169
6.5.3	Calvinist – all predestined .....	170
6.6	My voice .....	171
6.6.1	Wesleyan/ Methodist – an emphasis on call .....	171
6.6.2	Modified Existentialist – no blind following .....	172
6.7	More in Romans – the company of the called, privilege lost .....	174
6.7.1	Growing the company of the called .....	174
6.7.2	Dealing with privilege lost.....	177
6.8	An interlude of thought .....	179
6.9	Critical analysis .....	183
6.9.1	The Blend.....	183
6.9.2	The Text.....	183
	Chapter Seven: Gospel .....	187
7.1	Introduction .....	187
7.2	Graeco-Roman.....	187
7.2.1	Greek - εὐαγγέλιον Θεοῦ - a good news of grace, salvation, kingdom	187
7.2.2	Roman – announcing a new reign, freedom, justice .....	189



7.3	Hebrew .....	191
7.3.1	Old Testament – law and redemption .....	191
7.4	Afrikaner .....	193
7.4.1	Religion and Identity .....	193
7.4.2	Apartheid – pseudo-gospel, white survival and justice .....	195
7.5	African .....	197
7.5.1	Traditional – hungry ancestors and enemas .....	197
7.5.2	Black Consciousness – reclaiming the gospel, Moses, Jesus... ..	200
7.5.3	Desmond Tutu – transforming, triumphant, penitent .....	202
7.6	My voice .....	203
7.6.1	Wesleyan Methodist – whole salvation and a warm heart.....	203
7.6.2	Modified Existentialist – think and overthink.....	205
7.7	An interlude of thought .....	206
7.8	Critical Analysis .....	211
7.8.1	The blend .....	211
7.8.2	The text .....	211
	Chapter Eight: Beforehand .....	214
8.1	Introduction .....	214
8.2	Graeco-Roman.....	215
8.2.1	ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶ προφητῶ αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς αἱ ἰαίς .....	215
8.2.2	The Context – the fall of the gods .....	217
8.3	Hebrew.....	219
8.3.1	Paul does not give his own genealogy .....	219
8.3.2	Areas particularly sensitive for Jewish people .....	221
8.3.3	A response to these sensitive areas .....	222
8.4	African .....	223

8.4.1 Tradition and Black Consciousness – dilemmas, reclaiming past and future	223
8.4.2 Desmond Tutu - <i>mysterium tremendum</i> and the African <i>Weltanschauung</i>	228
8.5 Afrikaner	229
8.5.1 The people – sacred history, identity and institution	229
8.5.2 D. F. Malan – the greatest masterpiece	231
8.6 My Voice – making choices	231
8.7 An interlude of thought	235
8.8 Critical Analysis	245
8.8.1 The blend	245
8.8.2 The text	246
Chapter Nine: Obedience of Faith	248
9.1 Introduction	248
9.2 Graeco-Roman	251
9.2.1 Greek - εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστειως, God and standards	251
9.2.2 Roman – honour and shame, unity and mutuality	254
9.3 Jewish	258
9.3.1 Honour and shame – seen in the Old Testament	258
9.3.2 Nationalism	259
9.3.3 Righteousness	261
9.4 African	263
9.4.1 Traditional – hero and householder, extended agnatic family	263
9.4.2 Black Consciousness – affirmation of humanity, black worth	269
9.5 Afrikaner	272
9.5.1 Calvinism – to depart from ourselves	272
9.5.2 Apartheid – defending white African interests	272

9.6	My Voice .....	274
9.6.1	Wesleyan – enormous vision .....	274
9.6.2	Western modified existentialist – prosperity and work ethic .....	275
9.7	An Interlude of Thought.....	276
9.8	Critical Analysis .....	290
9.8.1	The blend .....	290
9.8.2	The Text .....	293
Chapter Ten: Conclusion.....		295
10.1	Reading ourselves in the light of the text .....	295
10.2	Building Blends .....	300
10.3	Reading the text.....	304
10.3.1	Looking at the appropriation.....	304
10.3.2	Looking at the fusing of multiple horizons .....	305
10.4	Limitations and further ideas .....	307
10.5	The end.....	307
Chapter Eleven: Reference List.....		308

## ABSTRACT

With most Biblical scholarship coming from the western world, an African viewpoint can challenge the dominance of the western discourse and create new possibilities of meaning.

Using Conceptual Blending this study engages in a reading of Romans 1:1-5 in the South African contexts of the 1970s and 1980s and builds scenarios which describe conversational possibilities between contexts leading to the development of localised meaning and transformative praxis.

I use four methods in this study and their application creates a web of meaning, rather than a linear development of ideas. The Tri-polar Method and the Intercontextual Method allow for an African frame of reference in order to arrive at an appropriation for an African context. An intertextual method examines key phrases of the text in the original contexts, South African contexts and the autobiographical context. The phrases are 'slave of Jesus Christ', 'called apostle set apart', 'gospel of God', 'promised beforehand' and 'obedience of faith'. Conceptual Blending creates narratives which invite discussion and encourage the reader to acknowledge his or her ideo-theological biases. These together form a technique which I use here in a case study.

The study results in a Conceptual Blend for each key phrase. While conclusions are suggested, the value of the study is in opening new directions of thought for the reader and encouraging a suspension of disbelief in order to perceive new possibilities. The concluding chapter describes a discussion around Conceptual Blending and in it one of the characters makes a comment about a blend which illustrates the experience. *"We all identified with that – Jew, Greek, Black and White. The first century had crosses while this age has rubber bullets and tear gas – but there is something viscerally the same in our experiences. It gave an urgency to our work."*

## CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Something Autobiographical

I am a South African. I was born in South Africa and have lived in South Africa for all of my fifty years. To South Africans, our country is the centre of the world. To Europe and America, we are an enigmatic political entity at the far tip of Africa. Our lives are in flux, our future is uncertain, and yet I have the stubborn conviction that God did not make South Africa – or Africa for that matter – as an afterthought or a by-product of the rest of creation. We surely have something to contribute to understanding God and his work and in particular, that set of writing which I understand to be Scripture.

Many readers are willing to acknowledge that they read the Bible through their own particular lenses or biases. By this we mean that we perpetuate our own beliefs and our own subjectivity. For this reason it is helpful to come to the Biblical texts with radical approaches – things which encourage us to interpret them differently and to broaden the range of possible meaning of the text. Even if some may think that we are taking liberties with the text just for the moment, we hope that the exercise will open up new understanding.

With most Biblical scholarship coming from the western world, an African viewpoint can challenge the dominance of the western discourse and create new possibilities of meaning – an example of which will be seen in this thesis.

My motivation for this study came from the conviction that the African voice needs to be heard in the interpreting of texts and not only for the benefit of Africa, but for the benefit of all who look for a better understanding of the intended meaning of the authors of the texts.

Although I call myself an African, there are those who would dispute this, because I am of European descent. In truth, there are people whose Africanness is different to mine, and into whose world I look as a stranger - in much the same way as I look into the world of the Bible. I have been struck by the fact that looking into the world of the black African, I am challenged to see the humanity of that world. This perspective encourages me to see the humanity revealed in Scripture. It makes me wonder if I need always be a stranger to that world which is preserved in

Scripture. I am convinced that academia should not neglect the compassionate and empathetic understanding of the human element of Biblical texts.

As we shall see in the next chapter African scholarship encourages the reading of Scripture with attention to multiple contexts. I have already described at least three contexts which I inhabit. My own context, which would be the context of my autobiography; the black African context in which, while I may sometimes feel a stranger, I do legitimately live; and the complex context of Scripture which is not homogenous but which I experience both through being immersed in it as devotional texts and through academic study.

## **1.2 The Challenge**

The challenge might be to weave these contexts together and to allow Scripture to speak in a new way – in a way which removes some of the feeling of being a stranger and in a way which reminds us of the human story. In the next chapter I will explain in detail the technique that I propose to use.

My hypothesis is that using the theory and practice of Conceptual Blending in the reading of biblical texts in the South African context to build scenarios which encapsulate conversational possibilities, involving both the suspension of disbelief and engaging the ideo-theological position of the reader, can lead to the development of localised meaning and transformative praxis: A Case Study of Conceptual Blending in reading Romans 1:1- 5 in the context of the Struggle in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.

## **1.3 Some Choices**

### **1.3.1 Contexts**

I have chosen a particular South African context which will provide an African voice – or rather some of the voices. I do not feel able to use a context too far removed from my own – such as a period before western colonisation. I also do not want to use a context too close to the present as it is liable to change too quickly. I have thus settled on the struggle period of the 1970s and 80s with which I am personally familiar and which also provides a good entry point into African diversity. Admittedly, whatever context is chosen, our interpretation of that context is governed by our current understanding and experience.

The struggle in South Africa during the 1970s and 80s was to overcome the massive injustices of the apartheid state. It was also a struggle for people to find their identity. It was a struggle to find a way for diverse peoples to live together. This struggle continues in South Africa today. It is a struggle in which the world is going to be engaged more and more as societies in Africa and the west become increasingly multi-ethnic.<sup>1</sup>

This struggle for identity and understanding of diversity was experienced in the Christian Church as well as in society at large. The questions were, how does God want his people to live together? Is it possible, and desirable, to find ways of enjoying diversity without oppressing one another?

In the New Testament, the movement of Jesus followers was extended beyond the Judean people, where it had started. Similarly to the South African setting there were battles for dominance and struggles with managing diversity. The political landscape was, however, different. The contemporary setting was the result of extensive empire building on the part of the Greeks and the Romans. The ancient forms of democracy practised in the Greek city states and the Roman senate were being eroded to the point where they were virtually non-existent. Yet it seems likely that the questions people in Paul's churches were asking would be very similar to those asked in South Africa. How does God want his people to live together?

The intention of this study is to allow these situations to interact and to begin to engage with the questions which arise from the interaction.

### 1.3.2 Text

Insofar as this study is exploring a technique for Bible study rather than a particular part of the Bible, I could perhaps have chosen any Biblical text, however because I had an interest in Paul and in the problem of living together in diversity, I chose to focus on one of his letters, the book of Romans. In this letter Paul deals with issues of diversity in the Roman context that resonate with many of my own South African experiences. I shall focus on the first five verses of chapter 1.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example that the recent vote that Britain should leave the European Union was probably partly due to increased immigration into the country.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/14/immigration-could-overwhelm-britain-says-pro-brexit-minister-andrea-leadsom>.

### 1.3.3 Limits

This study is interesting because of its scope. We are attempting a very big picture. This is unfortunately its own drawback because we are simply unable to fill in the detail to the extent which we would like. We would like to study the whole of Romans – but there is only space for a few words to be key points in the web that we shall weave. We would like every voice in both contexts to be heard, but there is not enough space and sometimes we just don't know enough about them. We would like to include every scholar who has written about Paul or this letter, but there is not space. I think it is worth the trade off, though, in order to see a broader landscape.

Another limitation is the necessity of seeing this whole study through the lens of my personal experience. It would be most intriguing to see the same work done by someone with a different background in the African context – someone more familiar with indigenous African traditions, for example, or by someone who has different fundamental understanding of Paul's context.

## 1.4 There will be interludes

Technical history books say things one way.

In the early hours, heavily armed police forced residents out of their homes and loaded their belongings onto government trucks. The residents were taken to a large tract of land 19 kilometres (12 mi) from the city centre, known as Meadowlands, which the government had purchased in 1953. Meadowlands became part of a new planned black city called Soweto. Sophiatown was destroyed by bulldozers, and a new white suburb named Triomf (Triumph) was built in its place.<sup>2</sup>

People in the story tell it another way. Desmond Tutu likes to tell the story of a little girl he encountered. She and her family had been resettled against their will by the apartheid government.

In a visit to the Ciskei Bantustan in the Eastern Cape at the end of June 1979, Tutu toured one of the places to which people had been removed. A conversation that lasted a few seconds was burned into his mind, and he was to repeat it in almost exactly the same words for years afterward:

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<sup>2</sup> As reported in Wikipedia found online  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid\\_in\\_South\\_Africa#Forced\\_removals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid_in_South_Africa#Forced_removals).



In Zweledinga I met this little girl who lives with her widowed mother and sister. I asked whether her mother received a pension or any other grant and she said, "No."

"Then how do you live?" I asked.

"We borrow food," she said.

"Have you ever returned the food you have borrowed?"

"No."

"What happens if you can't borrow food?"

"We drink water to fill our stomachs."<sup>3</sup>

And sometimes there are echoes.

There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.5 How to Weave a Web**

I am using four theories to form a framework for this study, which will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Although they are distinct, their influences are interdependent allowing for a web of ideas, rather than a strictly linear development. What might be called the shell is provided by the Tri-polar theory proposed by Jonathan Draper – essentially requiring at least two readings of the text leading to an appropriation or final reading. This shell is refined by using the Intercontextual theory of Justin Ukpong, which insists on using an African frame of reference for one of the readings in order to arrive at an appropriation that is useful in an African context. Each of these readings will be done using an intertextual method, which starts at the word level, but weaves a web as the contexts of the words are explored. Thus while this thesis is anchored in the first verses of Romans, its reach will extend into the rest of Romans and occasionally beyond into the rest of the New Testament. Using autobiographical theory, this intertextual method also takes into account the autobiographical aspect that is present when a reader engages with a text. As will be seen, there will be multiple readings of the text and they will be brought into conversation according to the theory of conceptual blending.

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<sup>3</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu Rabble-Rouser for Peace* Johannesburg: Rider Books, 2007 p177.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 18:2 (New International Version.)

## 1.6 A Road Map

Chapter two describes the theoretical framework which will be used and provides a more detailed road map. The various theories and methods are combined to create a technique, which will be applied throughout the rest of the study. Chapters three and four of this thesis describe the two contexts in which we are interested. They describe South Africa during the struggle era and give background to each of the voices, which will be heard in this thesis. In the same way, they attempt to unpack the background of the original writing of the letter to the Romans. They describe the voices that will be heard and put them into context.

The subsequent content is driven by the text of Romans 1:1-5 and the intertextual method. There is a basic linearity in that we read the first few verses as they are written, but in the detail, this becomes a web as more from the letter is drawn in and each voice is heard. In all, five words or word groups form touch points and become chapters in the thesis. These are 'slave', 'called apostle set apart', 'gospel', 'promised beforehand' and 'obedience of faith.' Each chapter is completed by describing and using methods derived from Conceptual Blending. The principles of Conceptual Blending will be explained as the study unfolds in sections labelled 'An Interlude of Thought.' These sections will also include the created blends, which become a little more sophisticated as the thesis progresses. Sometimes it will feel a little mysterious, as the reader is encouraged to be part of the experience rather than strictly an observer. Sometimes the narrative elements of the Conceptual Blending will intrude into the other parts of the thesis. At the end of each chapter, I give my own analysis, but also encourage the reader to make their own observations, rather than to make mine definitive. The technique of study should open space for questions and discussion and be open-ended.

Just a note on formatting: When narrative elements come into the thesis main body, they are shown in italics in text boxes. These boxes should be read as part of the flow of the text and not seen as supplemental. They are simply to help differentiate the elements of the text. In the 'Interlude of Thought' sections, the Conceptual Blends own the plain text while italics will indicate the world outside of the blend.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

In my working, the use of the theoretical framework led to a technique and thus this thesis has become a case study in the use of the technique. The four key aspects of the theoretical framework are described below, followed by a description of the technique.

### 2.2 Tri-polar Theory

Gerald West has been helpful in explaining the shape of much of African Biblical Scholarship and I quote him here:

The most characteristic form of African biblical scholarship falls within what has been called a comparative paradigm, which Knut Holter has helpfully defined

as studies whose major approach is a comparative methodology that facilitates a parallel interpretation of certain Old Testament [and New Testament] texts or motifs and supposed African parallels, letting the two illuminate one another. Traditional exegetical methodology is of course found here, too; however, the Old Testament [and/or New Testament] is approached from a perspective where African comparative material is the major dialogue partner and traditional exegetical methodology is subordinated to this perspective.<sup>5</sup>

The tri-polar theory, as described by Jonathan Draper,<sup>6</sup> upholds precisely this sort of methodology and I shall use it to bring the African voice, or voices, into conversation with the Biblical text.

The three eponymous poles are the text, the context of the reader, and what might be called the application of the text to the context. Draper names the poles as follows: distantiation - to mean the reading the text without reference to the context of the reader and while keeping a distance; contextualisation – reading the text in the

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<sup>5</sup> West, Gerald O. "Interpreting 'The Exile' in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-Theological Dilemma in Post-Colonial South Africa" in *Exile and Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa otwsa/otssa: Pretoria August 2007* (ed. Bob Becking & Dirk Human) Leiden: Brill, 2008 p1. He quotes Holter, Knut *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations 1967-2000*, New York: Peter Lang, 2002 p88.

<sup>6</sup> Draper, Jonathan "Old Scores and New Notes: Where and What is Contextual Exegesis in the New South Africa?" in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in honour of Albert Nolan* (ed. McGlory T. Spekman & Larry T. Kaufman) Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001 p153-158.

context of the reader; and appropriation – finding the relevance of the text to the contemporary situation and if possible finding a localised meaning.

Gerald West has challenged the appropriation pole of this theory, saying that this can never be done in an objective manner. The ideological and theological beliefs of the reader (the one doing the appropriating) are going to colour the final result. He proposes that the third pole should thus be the reader, who with all his or her ideo-theological baggage, brings about a conversation between the distantiation and the contextualisation.<sup>7</sup> This is nicely consistent with the manner in which we will be using the autobiographical component of the intertextual analysis.

Draper, responding to West, has questioned the validity of not only the appropriation, but also the distantiation pole. “However, the model needs to take account more keenly of the pre-understanding of the reader and its impact on the possibility of distantiation.”<sup>8</sup> It appears to me that the text stands on its own and does not require either a reader or an interpreter and thus distantiation is a legitimate pole. Draper, however, suggests a solution to his problem and offers that in order to correctly read the text as if from its original context we need to have moments of “willing suspension of disbelief,”<sup>9</sup> where as far as is possible our own ideo-theological biases are cast aside.

In this thesis, the intertextual method will remind us that even in the original context of the letter to the Romans there were different cultural contexts and we will see that Paul intentionally writes into these different contexts. There will not only be one reading of the text to meet the needs of the distantiation pole, but rather several allowing different voices from the original context to speak, or aid in the interpretation. These readings will be interspersed and will appear in sections in order to facilitate the conversation between the poles.

The appropriation pole will be handled using methods derived from the theory of conceptual blending, as shall be seen a little later.

It is useful, at this stage, to ask ourselves what we are hoping to achieve at the appropriation stage. Draper says, “Every reader reads from her or his context,

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<sup>7</sup> West, Gerald O. “Interpreting ‘The Exile’” p249-258.

<sup>8</sup> Draper, Jonathan “African Contextual Hermeneutics: Readers, Reading Communities, and Their Options Between Text and Context” in *Religion & Theology* 22, 2015 p19-20.

<sup>9</sup> Draper, Jonathan “African Contextual Hermeneutics” p20 and elsewhere in the paper.

either explicitly and meaningfully or implicitly and misleadingly – to claim universality of meaning for any reading is a form of false consciousness.”<sup>10</sup> If we are to take that approach, then we cannot look for an ultimate meaning of the text. Draper sees meaning as an interpretative stepping stone to transformational praxis, “It is precisely the particular reader’s ‘ideo-theological orientation’ (the goals and choices she makes) which brings the text and context into dialogue and enables the production of meaning and hence transformative praxis.”<sup>11</sup>

West, drawing heavily on Draper’s previous work and also that of Itumeleng Mosala<sup>12</sup> comes to the conclusion that:

How we connect present contexts and biblical texts is, in sum, through ideo-theological appropriation, partially determined by our understanding of the Bible as sacred text, our understanding of the Bible’s predominant shape, and our understanding of social location and social engagement (praxis).<sup>13</sup>

This reflects the reality that each reader is likely to have a ‘different take’ on texts depending on the environmental elements mentioned. The conceptual blending methods will provide a means of appropriation that further allows for the perception of the reader, as will be seen when we begin to work with the text.

### **2.3 Intercontextual Theory**

The Intercontextual theory – previously known as Inculturation – described by Justin Ukpong has similarities to the tri-polar theory. This, like the tri-polar theory requires us to read the text from two different perspectives. One perspective should be an African contemporary one, which is usually the writer’s own and is explicitly stated. As Ukpong says, “A very important feature of inculturation hermeneutics is the emphasis on using an African conceptual frame of reference in interpreting the Bible in Africa rather than using another conceptual frame for interpreting and applying the result in the African context.”<sup>14</sup> This African perspective will form the

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<sup>10</sup> Draper, Jonathan “African Contextual Hermeneutics” p15.

<sup>11</sup> Draper, Jonathan “African Contextual Hermeneutics” p13 and elsewhere in the paper.

<sup>12</sup> Mosala, Itumeleng J. “The Use of the Bible in Black Theology” in *The Unquestionable Right to Be Free: Essays in Black Theology*, (ed. Itumeleng J. Mosala and Buti Tlhagale) Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986 p196 and Mosala, Itumeleng J. *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> West, Gerald O. “Interpreting ‘The Exile’” p12.

<sup>14</sup> Ukpong, Justin “Reading the Bible in a Global Village: Issues and Challenges From African Readings” in *Reading the Bible in a Global Village*. Atlanta: SBL, 2002 p13.

contextualisation pole of the tri-polar theory for this thesis, in a sense amalgamating the theories.

The other reading should be done from the original context perspective, or traditional interpretations thereof.

Ukpong provides us with an example of reading from the African context in his study of Luke 16:1-13.<sup>15</sup> The passage is the story commonly known as the parable of the shrewd manager. Ukpong points out that this story has always been difficult to interpret because it seems to validate dishonest and corrupt behaviour. When he chooses to interpret it from the perspective of West African peasant farmers, another picture emerges. These farmers are palm producers and cocoa farmers. With the arrival of western civilisation a money-oriented economy replaced the old barter system. This saw the establishment of middle-men who bought cheaply from farmers and sold at a vast profit to exporters. This system was vastly exploitive. Instead of reading the parable as being about the rich property owner, as has been usual, these peasant farmers read the parable as being about the workers. Here the shrewd manager was winning out over a corrupt boss and so was admired for helping the exploited workers. This reading provides new insight to the parable – whether it is ‘the correct’ reading or not.

Thus using the foundation of Draper and Ukpong, the text will be studied as it might have been read during the period of the 1970s and 80s in South Africa.

As we examine this text through the lens of the South African context we will see that people existed in a world of multiple contexts (or perhaps what West and Draper might call ideo-theological communities) – those of Black Consciousness, White Superiority (apartheid), and multi-racial or non-racial thinking amongst others. We shall weave each of these contexts into a web or dialogue with the text of Romans.

This is not an uneducated reading nor in any way a naïve reading. Many of the supporters of apartheid and those who reacted against it were well-educated and

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<sup>15</sup> Ukpong, Justin “The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13): An Essay in Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic” in *Semeia*, 73. 1996,189-210.

well aware of the global context. However, they operated within a deeply oppressive local context and this provides the background text against which we will seek to understand the words of Romans 1:1-5.

Finally, I cannot hide my own voice as I attempt to draw these perspectives out and then put them together in a way that adds value to our understanding of the passages of Scripture. This role of myself as the reader is partly described here by Gerald West (only partly, because I am something more than a reader as well,)

Justin Ukpong, a key commentator on the comparative method, takes us a step further, in his own comments on the comparative approach. He says that the goal of comparative interpretation is “the actualization of the theological meaning of the text in today’s context so as to forge integration between faith and life, and engender commitment to personal and societal transformation.” What connects text and context, then, is a reader who activates a form of dialogical appropriation that has a theological and a praxiological dimension.<sup>16</sup>

My own voice will be heard as an activator of the dialogue – or the weaver of the web. It will also be there as the aspirant interpreter of the contexts, complete with biases and moments of objectivity, as well as inadequacy and moments of insight. It will, however, ultimately be just a strand in a larger web of conversation.

## 2.4 Intertextual Method

To provide texture and detail we will be using the Intertextual method. Julia Kristeva introduced the term “intertextuality” in the 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Kristeva recognised that “no text is an island: the words which a given text comprises and the texts a given text refers to in multifold ways have been used and read before.”<sup>18</sup> She also recognised that words and text could not be separated from culture.<sup>19</sup> This aspect of intertextuality makes it very suitable for working within our proposed theoretical

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<sup>16</sup> West, Gerald O. “Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa” in *African theology on the way: Current conversations, 2010* available online [http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008\\_Parratt.pdf](http://www.chora-strangers.org/files/chora/west2008_Parratt.pdf). Accessed 27/08/2015, 2008 p2. He quotes Ukpong, J.S. “Developments in Biblical interpretation in Africa: Historical and hermeneutical directions”, in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, trajectories and trends* (ed. G.O. West & M.W. Dube) Leiden: Brill, 2000 p24.

<sup>17</sup> Huizenga, Leroy A. “The Old Testament in the New, Intertextuality and Allegory” in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Vol. 38(1), 2015 p17–35, p23; Moyise, Steve “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New” in *The Old Testament in the New: Essays in Honour of J.L. North JSNTSup 189* (ed. S. Moyise) Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000 p14.

<sup>18</sup> Huizenga, Leroy “The Old Testament in the New” p23.

<sup>19</sup> Huizenga, Leroy “The Old Testament in the New” p24.

framework which is very sensitive to culture or context. Amongst other authors, Richard Hays brought the term onto the scene of biblical studies saying, “the most significant elements of intertextual correspondence between old context and new can be implicit rather than voiced, perceptible only within the silent space framed by the juncture of two texts.”<sup>20</sup> He also spoke of echoes in Scripture, which appropriately, resonates with other authors.

Biblical narratives contain echoes which seem to invite, simultaneously, reading within the boundaries of the scroll or book itself and crossing the scroll's edge to read the narrative in relation to other biblical writings which can be “heard” in it.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars such as Gershon Hepner have looked for these echoes in the form of the Hebrew words.<sup>22</sup> Stefan Alkier has proposed three angles with which one may approach intertextual reading. The first is related to the production of the text. The other two relate to the reader and are useful to us as we intend doing different readings.

The reception-oriented perspective investigates real connections that real readers have made. The experimental perspective involves reading texts in light of each other creatively to see what effects of meaning might be generated.<sup>23</sup>

This adds a level of complexity as we recognise also that our lives and own stories are texts which interact with the written text of Scripture. This leads us to realise that there was no one lived text in either of the contexts under discussion. In both there were many voices, sometimes speaking together, sometimes with a unique understanding of the local context. Schnitter speaks aptly of the “narrative multiverse.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Moyise, Steve “Intertextuality” p15. He quotes Hays, R.B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989 p155.

<sup>21</sup> Schnitter, Gary Edward “The Narrative Multiverse Within the Universe of the Bible: The Question of ‘Borderlines’ and ‘Intertextuality’” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 231-52, 2001 p 231.

<sup>22</sup> Hepner, Gershon “Verbal Resonance in the Bible and Intertextuality” in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 96 3-27, 2001 p4.

<sup>23</sup> Described in Huizenga, Leroy “The Old Testament in the New” p29.

<sup>24</sup> Schnitter, Gary “The Narrative Multiverse”



In order to grasp these multiple texts we are going to weave a tangled web using the techniques of Intertextuality described by James W. Voelz.<sup>25</sup> He allows for three levels of interpretation with which we will be looking at the text of Romans 1:1-5.

The first level is that of the meaning of the individual words. While there is a lexical meaning for each word, even single words are understood according to the context of the reader. For the South African voices we will be using the Revised Standard Version as it was possibly the most widely used English translation at the time of the struggle. When we draw in the voices from the original context we shall also examine the Greek where appropriate, using the text as we have it – acknowledging that even this has been subject to the influence of the passing years.

The second level is the level of the meaning of the grammatical construction or a group of words. In other words, we will look at the words within their own written context.

The third level is the meaning of the existence or positioning of the text (why was it written? or why was it included here?) This third level is usually understood primarily at a subconscious level and so will of necessity be interpretive.

Thus our usual practice will be to zoom in on a particular word in our chosen passage. We will analyse the meaning that this word has in the various interpretative contexts. We will then zoom out to include accompanying words in the phrase and also look at the broader sense of what the words seem to communicate.

We begin to weave the web as we recognise that the text does not stand on its own, but exists in a context. This context includes the rest of the text not under immediate discussion, the nearby text that may have similarities or use similar images and also other texts that are brought to mind by the current text. Voelz refers to the interpretive act of recognising relationships as 'matrixing'. He says, "It is these kinds of signs, or rather texts on these 'levels', which it would seem are interpreted by a textual receptor by 'matrixing', i.e. by being connected with other signs for interpretation."<sup>26</sup> There is no right or wrong linking of texts for reasons of

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<sup>25</sup> Voelz, James "Multiple Signs, Levels of Meaning and Self as Text: Elements of Intertextuality" in *Semeia* 69/70, 1995 p149-164.

<sup>26</sup> Voelz, James "Multiple Signs" p152.

interpretation in the mind of the casual reader. The reason for the link may be some long forgotten childhood experience, however, this would still inform the reader's evaluation of the text. It is for this reason that it is necessary to acknowledge the autobiographic or ideo-theological component of any reading of a text.

This leads on to the implication that part of interpretation is building connections with the text that is the 'self' of the reader or receptor. Specifically, Voelz says, these connections are built with the reader's life experience and with the reader's system of beliefs.<sup>27</sup> Here we will do the unique work of this thesis in bringing the life experiences and belief systems of those involved in the South African struggle of the 1970's and 80's to bear on the text of the Romans 1:1-5 – particularly in the area of identity and diversity. As writer of the thesis and as a reader of the text my 'self' will also be consciously made evident. This brings the added satisfaction of acknowledging that as we study the web, the web itself is an indication of the diversity of the South African situation.

We will also draw in the diversity of the voices of the original context of the writing of the text. As we include this in the web we will see things that seem incompatible because of the distances across space and time, but which will be drawn together by the process of Conceptual Blending.

The richness of the tangle will be enhanced by the use of multiple life experiences and belief systems as previously described. And, let the reader beware, as I build the web and my own life experience and system of belief inevitably plays a part in the matrixing, as the reader of this study reads, his or her own texts will also intertwine and create a personal aspect to the web. While this may begin as an unfortunate but unavoidable facet of the study, it becomes a benefit as we also reap the advantages of autobiographical biblical criticism. Jeffrey Staley who is a pioneer of this sort of work describes its importance:

Autobiographical biblical criticism is simply one attempt among many today that seeks to deal seriously with the "interested" nature of biblical critics and their "situatedness" as real readers in the physical world. It is critical – important, necessary – precisely for this reason: it openly challenges the traditional genre of academic discourse – the distanced, third-person voice that by default has counted as "scientific objectivity." Autobiographical biblical criticism challenges this genre by introducing into the professional arena,

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<sup>27</sup> Voelz, James "Multiple Signs" p155.

personal narratives and multiple voices and genres, along with occasional humour, parody, and satire. It is a trickster discourse that questions academic ways of knowing by privileging the ordinariness and aberrant intertextuality of much of our Bible reading.<sup>28</sup>

Ultimately, also, Voelz says, we recognise that not only do we read the written text in the light of our self, but we should come to read our self in the light of the written text<sup>29</sup> – and here we begin to see localised meanings and an entry to transformative praxis.

## 2.5 Conceptual Blending

The appropriation stage will be dealt with using Conceptual Blending as espoused by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.<sup>30</sup>

This provides a technique for reading the web we have created and seeing beyond the tangles. Conceptual Blending is a theory of cognition that says we think by combining ideas – at the very simplest level a metaphor would be an example of a blend. “‘Conceptual integration’ – often called ‘blending’ – is a basic and pervasive mental operation. It allows us to ‘blend’ two mental spaces to create a third that is not merely a composition of the first two but instead has emergent structure of its own.”<sup>31</sup> In general it is used to understand language and thinking and is used analytically,<sup>32</sup> but in this study I will be using it to consciously build blends.

The most effective way of beginning to understand Conceptual Blending is to examine an example.

*The Riddle of the Buddhist Monk:* A Buddhist monk begins at dawn one day walking up a mountain, reaches the top at sunset, meditates at the top

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<sup>28</sup> Staley, Jeffrey L. “What is Critical about Autobiographical (Biblical) Criticism?” in *Autographical Biblical Criticism: Learning to Read between Text and Self* (ed. Ingrid Rosa Kritzerberger) Dorset: Deo Publishing, 2002 p4.

<sup>29</sup> Voelz, James “Multiple Signs” p156.

<sup>30</sup> The textbook for Conceptual Blending is Fauconnier, Gilles & Turner, Mark *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* New York: Basic Books, 2002.

<sup>31</sup> Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark “Metonymy and Conceptual Integration” in *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter John Radden) Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing, 1999 p77.

<sup>32</sup> An interesting example of this is Vernon K. Robbins work. He describes Christian discourse as a conceptual blend of several pre-existing rhetorical dialects – such as apocalyptic, prophetic, wisdom and miracle. If we follow this we might say that Paul was already weaving webs as he wrote and we are simply expanding on them. Robbins, Vernon K. “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions From Cognitive and Social Science* (ed. Petri Luomanen et al.) Leiden: Brill, 2007.

overnight until, at dawn, he begins to walk back to the foot of the mountain, which he reaches at sunset. Make no assumptions about his starting or stopping or about his pace during the trips. Riddle: is there a place on the path that the monk occupies at the same hour of the day on the two trips?<sup>33</sup>

The riddle is easily solved by building a blend. Imagine that there is another monk who leaves the foot of the mountain at the same time as the first monk leaves the top. Will this monk meet the first monk as he comes down? Clearly the answer is yes, and thus the answer to the riddle is yes. The second monk represents the monk of yesterday and the action is compressed so that it all happens on one day. This blend allows us to find new insights.

One of the objections to Conceptual Blending as described by Fauconnier and Turner is that it is unnecessarily complicated. Another is that the use of metaphors to describe it obscures the processes involved.<sup>34</sup> In order to construct blends we would ideally like to have a set of principles or rules to follow. Here we find the authors of Conceptual Blending theory vague and reticent<sup>35</sup> – preferring to use examples and explanations of multiple aspects of blending in order to describe what happens. Fauconnier and Turner go so far as to say, “Conceptual blending is not a compositional algorithmic process and cannot be modeled as such for even the most rudimentary cases. . . In this regard, the most suitable analog for conceptual integration is not chemical composition but biological evolution.”<sup>36</sup>

Here we see at once the advantage and the difficulty of using this theory. The advantage is that we may open new possibilities for understanding and meaning by using this evolutionary rather than analytical approach. The difficulty is that we do need a process to follow so that we are consistent in our approach.

Fortunately, scholars in the realm of computer science also have an interest in generating creative ideas algorithmically and have done some analytical work. It is

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<sup>33</sup> Turner, Mark “Blending and Conceptual Integration” online <http://markturner.org/blending.html> accessed 27/08/2015.

<sup>34</sup> Ritchie, David L. “Lost in ‘Conceptual Space’: Metaphors of Conceptual Integration” in *Metaphor and Symbol* 19, 31-50, 2004 p31.

<sup>35</sup> Pereira, Francisco C. and Cardoso, Amilcar “Optimality Principles for Conceptual Blending: A First Computational Approach” , online <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1eb1/6bb7f3273f93ff5715260cd7fb562f413376.pdf> accessed 10/02/2017 Section 2

<sup>36</sup> Fauconnier, Gilles and Turner, Mark “Conceptual Integration Networks” in *Cognitive Science* 22(2) 133-187, 1998 p5.

possible to identify three phases of the process. The first is *input spaces* the second is *blend projection* and the third *blend elaboration*.<sup>37</sup>

*Input spaces* may be almost any domain or set which can be conceived. For our project the input spaces will be the Biblical or original context of the text and the South African context during the struggle era. The elements of the input spaces will be the different voices in each context along with the work of the intertextual analysis.

In *blend projection*, elements of the different input spaces are combined in order to create a new space. This is difficult to do programmatically as it could result in a very large number of blends,<sup>38</sup> many of which would make no sense whatsoever. We will follow Boyang Li et al's proposal<sup>39</sup> based on the work of Brandt and Brandt<sup>40</sup> to use context and goals to define the direction we take in creating blends. For our project, the context is a thesis in Biblical Studies. We will expand on the goal in the next section but we will also attempt to cut through some of the complexity by focusing on the specific goal of the principles of Conceptual Blending.

According to Fauconnier and Turner, this goal is to achieve human scale.<sup>41</sup> Humans are able to understand things more easily when time and space are reduced to scales which we can comprehend – which is why, for example, we like to make models showing the relative distances in the solar system. The devisers of Conceptual Blending list five subgoals:

- Compress what is diffuse
- Obtain global insight
- Strengthen vital relations
- Come up with a story
- Go from Many to One<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Pereira, Francisco C. and Cardoso, Amílcar "Optimality Principles" Section 2; also Li, Boyang et al "Goal-Driven Conceptual Blending: A Computational Approach for Creativity" 2012 online <http://computationalcreativity.net/iccc2012/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/009-Li.pdf> accessed 10/02/2017 p1.

<sup>38</sup> Li, Boyang et al "Goal-Driven Conceptual Blending" p1.

<sup>39</sup> Li, Boyang et al "Goal-Driven Conceptual Blending" p1.

<sup>40</sup> Brandt, L. and Brandt, P. A. "Making Sense of a Blend" *Apparatur* 4,62-71 2002.

<sup>41</sup> Fauconnier and Turner *Conceptual Blending* p322-323.

<sup>42</sup> Fauconnier and Turner *Conceptual Blending* p322-323.

These subgoals will help us to keep focus and will be unpacked in the course of the thesis.

*Blend Elaboration* is achieved by pattern completion and by ‘allowing the blend to run’. Pattern completion, at its most obvious, is where there is an element in one input space that is not present in another. There may be an opportunity in the blended space to create that complementary element, allowing us to see a new possibility. Letting the blend run opens up the organic aspect of Conceptual Blending theory where the blend set up ‘grows’ based on its starting criteria.

One of the difficulties with Biblical Studies is achieving an accurate picture of the background or context to the text. This technique that we are using also presents the challenge of accurately describing a contemporary culture which is not the author’s own. There is the temptation to give up and say that it cannot honestly be done. The authors of Conceptual Blending give some reassurance about this when they describe the struggles of a blender to get into the character of Kant:

Whether her imitation of Kant is objectively accurate is beside the point; what matters is whether the blended character she imagines and “becomes” is intellectually productive. Remarkably, she can get new insight, have a different cast of mind, acquire new capacities to an extent as she inhabits this blend, and thus make discoveries that were otherwise unavailable to her.<sup>43</sup>

For us, ‘intellectually productive’ will be when we are able to use blends to put aside our preconceived ideas or ideotheological biases. It will be when we are offered new possibilities and when we are forced to suspend disbelief in order to consider a different idea. There will thus be dissonances and clashes and unexpected disruptions in the course of the thesis which make it difficult for either the author or the reader to settle into a comfortable “been-there-done-that” rhythm for long. These will generally be of the form of interruptions supposedly by “members of the Conceptual Blending team” which may add comment or an observation from one of the voices or explain some of the flow of the relevant section.

I have tried to retain some of the metaphorical or story-telling essence of Conceptual Blending by expanding on some elements of the theory throughout the

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<sup>43</sup> Fauconnier and Turner *Conceptual Blending* p254.

thesis using illustrations by Fauconnier and Turner. These elements will be Identity, Imagination, Integration, Compression and Networks.

## 2.6 Putting it together

The contextual pole of Tri-polar theory concerns itself with “understanding ourselves as historical beings rooted in a specific time and place, confronted by a historical text rooted in a specific time and place”<sup>44</sup> as described by Hans-Georg Gadamer.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, we aim to “bring these two historical specificities together . . . so that each throws light on the other, so that their horizons touch and fuse in historical consciousness.”<sup>46</sup> Gadamer defines a horizon as, “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.”<sup>47</sup> He goes on to say that, “The concept of ‘horizon’ suggests itself because it expresses the wide, superior vision that the person who is seeking to understand must have.”<sup>48</sup> The two particular horizons of which he speaks are that of the present, containing, amongst other things, the prejudices of the reader and that of the historical context of the text. Thus, “Understanding . . . is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves.”<sup>49</sup> If benefit were gained by the fusion of these two horizons, would more benefit not be gained by fusing multiple horizons? We know that the original context was not culturally a homogeneous one, but may be said to have contained both a Jewish and a Graeco-Roman horizon, amongst others. Similarly, the South African context is not culturally homogeneous. This context contains, amongst others, a black consciousness element, a white supremacist element and a moderate element. Each of these elements may even contain – or be a fusion of – other elements, such as historical tradition and contemporary ideology.

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<sup>44</sup> Draper, Jonathan “Old Scores and New Notes” p157.

<sup>45</sup> Draper references Gadamer, Hans-Georg *Truth and Method. Second, Revised Edition.* (Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall) New York: Continuum, 1993 p306-307.

<sup>46</sup> Draper, Jonathan “Old Scores and New Notes” p157.

<sup>47</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg *Truth and Method* (trans. William Glen-Doepel) London: Sheed and Ward, 1979 p269.

<sup>48</sup> Gadamer *Truth and Method* (trans. Glen-Doepel) p272.

<sup>49</sup> Gadamer *Truth and Method* (trans. Glen-Doepel) p273.

This thesis will draw these different voices together, using Conceptual Blending.

I see the theoretical framework for this thesis like a rainbow stretching across the sky and anchored to the earth on both ends. At one end is Conceptual Blending theory with its blended space and emerging ideas. At the other is Intercontextual theory, grounded in its two readings of Scripture – one from the original perspective and one from an African perspective. Very close to this end is Tri-polar theory, linking arms with Intercontextual theory at its contextual and distantiation poles. While the distantiation pole and original perspective reading may be similar anchors, the Tri-polar theory draws its context, in this case, from the African soil of Intercontextual theory. We will expand on both of these poles to allow different voices to speak. Tri-polar theory has a third arm, the appropriation pole, which reaches out to join with Conceptual Blending theory which reaches back to receive its inputs. At the point where these theories meet we find Autobiographical theory. Here it is made explicit that a human being is receiving the inputs and creating outputs. The author's own ideo-theological positions are going to colour – or even taint – the flow through the rainbow.

Autobiographical theory also reaches down to the ground where it is in touch with the Intertextual method which does the nitty-gritty work.

It will be helpful to have an outline of the process that will be followed. I have attempted to generalise it in the next pages, with an explanation of the specific application in the thesis. It has already been stated that the text to be studied will be Romans 1:1-5. It is already apparent that there will need to be some limiting of the area covered and to achieve that we put in a question to be answered. The question that I have chosen, because of the resonances with diversity mentioned in chapter 1, is "How can diverse people live together well?" This does introduce a further element of subjectivity, which is not welcome, but can be contained.

We outline the process that will be used in this study as follows.

#### 2.6.1 Intertextual component

This is the method part of the thesis tool-set. It will deal with the detail work of the study. Most of what follows deals with limiting and selecting text. In the outline



that follows, text between square brackets will be dealt with as a portion. Text between double asterisks will be omitted or dealt with cursorily. The one portion of text in round brackets was deemed to be covering similar ground to previous portions. These will be explained in the body of the thesis.

Outline:

- vs 1    \*\* Paul, \*\*  
[a servant  
of Jesus Christ,]  
[called  
to be an apostle,  
set apart]  
[for the gospel  
of God]
- vs 2                    [which he promised  
beforehand  
through his prophets  
in the holy scriptures,]
- vs 3-4    \*\* the gospel  
concerning his Son,  
who was descended from David  
according to the flesh and  
designated Son of God  
in power  
according to the Spirit  
of holiness  
by his resurrection  
from the dead,  
Jesus Christ our Lord, \*\*
- vs 5    through whom  
(we have received  
grace and  
apostleship)  
[to bring about the  
obedience  
of faith  
for the sake of his name  
among all the nations]

In order to use the intertextual component we need to decide on the following:

- *Total extent of the text to be included* (In this case the letter to the Romans). For our purposes, this means that our matrixing may bring to mind texts from outside Romans, but in general we will reject them. Other studies could allow the use of the whole New Testament, or extra-biblical material. Studies could also be limited to one chapter or pericope.
- *Theme or question to be answered* (How can diverse people live together well?) This question guides us when choosing which aspects of the text to explore. When faced with a choice, due to space limitations, we will choose those words in the text which seem likely to help us answer the question.
- *Entry point. Text to start the study* (Romans 1:1-5)
- *Total size of study* – (here, based on length of thesis required) The size of the study might be adequately limited by the entry point and the extent of the material to be drawn in. In our case the theoretical framework allows for an almost infinite amount of detail and we must seek limitations.
- *Degree of detail:* (here, we will go into detail on certain points, but due to size limitations touch on others more briefly) This asks: do we use every word, every cross reference, every background note and so on? This would depend on the reader and study. A single word study might be done almost exhaustively, a non-academic study might just use a commentary.

### 2.6.2 Intercontextual/ Tri-Polar component

These theories tell us that we will be using two (at least) readings of the text. Because we included the reader as being essential to the appropriation pole it also

tells us that there should be an autobiographical reading. We remember that the appropriation pole will be handled by Conceptual Blending theory.

In order to work within these theories we need to decide on:

- *Contexts to be brought in as Conceptual Blending inputs* (Original context: 'Jewish' and 'Graeco-Roman', SA struggle context 1970s 80s: Black African, 'Afrikaner', Autobiographical.)<sup>50</sup>

### 2.6.3 Conceptual Blending component

The blends that will be constructed will be scenarios involving characters from the various settings, brought together into imaginary situations. We remember that we are working with the goal of achieving human scale. The other goal that we are now able to introduce is to answer our limiting question, that is "How can diverse people live together well?" As we use these constraints to set up blends or scenarios we envisage finding situations which challenge our preconceived notions or even offer entirely new insights.

For each blend we need to:

- *Choose a setting.* It may be basic such as a conversation. It may stem from a recent news report or local event. It may rise out of the text. It may be suggested by the imaginary characters who will populate it. It should have relevance to the theme or question asked.
- *Choose characters representing some or all of the voices.* These could be imaginary or real or representative (such as the monk in the earlier illustration.)

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<sup>50</sup> A note on the naming of the contexts and the voices. I am aware that no group of people is homogenous. I am aware that grouping people together encourages stereotyping. I am aware that sometimes the commonly used names are offensive or confusing. I will use the name 'Afrikaner' to refer to the group of white-skinned people who advocated and enforced apartheid in South Africa. Not all Afrikaans-speaking white people were in this group and I apologise to them for the inferred inclusion. Also not all Afrikaans-speaking people were white and these are not referred to here by 'Afrikaner'. Similarly, by 'Black' I will mean those who were oppressed by the laws of apartheid. The name 'Graeco-Roman' will designate those from the first century CE who were of Greek or Roman extraction or who had been absorbed into that culture, but in general we will look at the Greek text and the Roman context. The name 'Jewish' is contentious as being associated with the modern day inhabitants of Israel. I will, however, use the name, but vary it with the names 'Judean' and 'Israelite'. I find that in this study the use of the name 'Judean' might imply a discontinuity with the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as well as with previous scholarship, which I do not intend. For discussion on whether to use "Jews" or "Judeans" or something else see Esler, Philip F. *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 p63-74.

- *Let the characters interact, make a story.* Here we bear in mind that we want to challenge the ideo-theological leaning of the reader and are not afraid to venture into areas of suspended disbelief. There are various types of blending networks and these could be used at varying levels of complexity. (This thesis will use the simpler networks.)
- *Often the process ends here.* The implicit ending is the unknown impact of the story on the unknown reader leading to some unknown localised meaning and unknown transformative practice. In this thesis we will make some of the impact on the writer explicit and also remember that the reader may be impacted differently. Insofar as *critical analysis* is also a form of blending it will also be used here.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN STRUGGLE ERA CONTEXT

### 3.1 Introduction

We now turn to the actual input spaces for the conceptual blending that will be done. We describe first the space that is the Contextualisation pole of Tri-Polar theory. This is also the African contemporary perspective called for by Intercontextual theory.

The goal of this chapter is to become immersed in the setting described so that we can reliably use it as an input space to the blends. This is, however, not a study in anthropology and so should be seen as introductory.

In this space, we have the voice of the architects of apartheid. In reality, this voice spoke before the era under discussion and was in the process of being silenced in the 1970s and 1980s and so we will listen carefully also to its earlier voice. We may sometimes regret the idea that history is written by the victors, especially when we have sympathy with those who were defeated. In this case there is little sympathy from the public in general and in some ways this voice is being lost. Much of the theological reflection on apartheid is written by the 'other side' – we think, for instance, of work written or collected by John de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio.<sup>51</sup> It is no longer easy to hear the original voice of the architects of apartheid, for all it dominated the South African scene so decisively for many years. I have tried to choose a 'champion' for each voice, in an attempt to preserve – or maybe introduce – a human element. The champion here will be D.F. Malan, the first National Party prime minister and the one under whom apartheid was introduced. I have had to decide how to name this voice and have settled on the 'Afrikaner' voice. Much of the research must be into Afrikaner thought processes, but the voice itself was not that of every Afrikaner – and certainly not of every Afrikaans-speaker, as this group would have included many of those classified under apartheid as so-called 'Coloured' and thus 'non-white'. It also certainly included many English-speakers and to a limited extent even people with dark skins.

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<sup>51</sup> For instance de Gruchy, John W. & Villa-Vicencio, Charles (eds.) *Apartheid is a Heresy* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

When we speak of the 'struggle', we mean that intentional effort made by those who opposed apartheid to overcome it. It is possible that the eventual death of apartheid was inevitable, however, one movement that clearly opposed it and opened the way for concerted opposition was the Black Consciousness movement, one of its influential leaders being Steve Biko. Apartheid was born with a theological basis, and similarly Black Consciousness grew out of the Black Theology of James Cone<sup>52</sup> in America. It was the focus of a groundswell for change and a broad range of people connected themselves with it. I have chosen Desmond Tutu to champion its voice.<sup>53</sup> There may be some who would argue that he was too moderate and did not fully agree with some of the more radical aspects of Black Consciousness. That may be true, but he was outspoken and his voice echoes today that of black people rising up against apartheid.

There is a third voice that needs to be heard. The narrative presented in many quarters in South Africa today (2016) is that all white people supported apartheid. I have found this to be so strongly believed by black people that I don't even try to insist, in certain circles, that I myself never supported apartheid as I am looked upon with pity as if I am self-deluded, or lying. However, this third voice represents my voice and that of many other South Africans both black and white. This group of people came to realise the evil of apartheid and joined to fight against it. They were generally less radical than many in Black Consciousness and the common theme was a desire for race to be considered irrelevant in society. While this voice is clearly separate from the apartheid voice, there is an overlap with the Black Consciousness voice. Desmond Tutu and others worked together with this middle group in many, many instances – including with the Kairos Document.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See for instance Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1970.

<sup>53</sup> Muzorewa, Gwinyai H. *The Origins and Development of African Theology* Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2000.

<sup>54</sup> The Kairos Document concludes with the signatures of 156 people from over 20 South African denominations. The document may be found online at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985>.

## 3.2 Apartheid and the Afrikaner

### 3.2.1 What exactly was apartheid?

In 1948, the National Party won the majority of the seats in parliament in the general election. Although it had fewer total votes than the then ruling United Party, this majority allowed the party to govern the country. They lost no time in reinforcing their position by passing a number of laws that constituted the system of apartheid.<sup>55</sup>

This legislation can be separated into two categories: grand apartheid and petty apartheid. Grand apartheid laws determined people's race (Population Registration Act of 1950) and where they could live (Group Areas Act of 1950) and work (Bantu Building Workers Act of 1951). Tens of thousands of Black and Colored families were uprooted from their homes when the Group Areas Act reclassified large areas of the country as reserved for Whites only. They were moved onto non-White land that lacked any infrastructure or amenities. The prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 banned marriage and sexual relations between people of different races.<sup>56</sup>

In order to monitor the movement of black people through white areas the 'reference book' or 'pass' was created. All black people were required to carry their pass with them at all times and could be arrested and detained if found without it.<sup>57</sup> This criminalised most of the black population and became the most hated piece of legislation.<sup>58</sup>

Black people were also increasingly disallowed from being South Africa citizens:

The government sought to force Black South Africans out of White areas completely through the establishment of self-governing homelands. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959, and the Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970 created eight homelands within the borders of South Africa and forced Black South Africans to take up citizenship of a homeland even if they had never lived there.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sonneborn, Liz *The End of Apartheid in South Africa* New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010 p45.

<sup>56</sup> Thomson, Doug "Apartheid, Laws" in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* (ed. Richard T. Schaefer) London: Sage Publications, 2008 p83.

<sup>57</sup> Sonneborn, Liz *The End of Apartheid* p47.

<sup>58</sup> Thomson, Doug "Apartheid, Laws" p83.

<sup>59</sup> Thomson, Doug "Apartheid, Laws" p83.

Legislation was more than an inconvenience. It had effects that are still felt sixty years later. Laws prohibited black people from staying overnight in white areas unless it was part of their employment, thus, for example, domestic servants and mineworkers were provided with accommodation, but their families were not allowed to join them. This was obviously disruptive of family life and led to various social breakdowns.<sup>60</sup>

On top of this, the Bantu Education Act was perhaps even more destructive. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 ended government funding to mission schools that were run by religious groups. This left people reliant on the government-run education system that was inferior to the system provided for white children. “The schools’ curricula focused on molding black children into compliant, productive workers who would never question or make demands of their white employers.”<sup>61</sup>

Petty apartheid laws were as a result of the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 and are remembered for their ‘Whites Only’ signs and the strangeness of different park benches for different ‘population groups’.

The Nationalists enacted the law after the South African courts held that a number of segregationist measures were invalid because they resulted in unequal treatment. The invocation of the separate-but-equal doctrine incensed the government and led it to introduce the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, which allows any person in control of public premises to reserve separate and *unequal* facilities for different races and abolishes the power of the courts to nullify such actions. This resulted in separate and substantially unequal amenities for different races in all spheres of life – buses, trains, restaurants, libraries, and parks among others.<sup>62</sup>

These discriminatory laws were passed with a flood of propaganda and achieved a remarkable separation of the races. Claire Datnow (who is white) finishes the chapter from which I quoted earlier with the observation so commonly made by white people today:

Like all children I didn’t understand many things. But even as a child, I felt something was wrong, though I could not yet articulate my thoughts on the

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<sup>60</sup> Datnow, Claire *Behind the Walled Garden of Apartheid: Growing Up White in Segregated South Africa: A Memoir* Birmingham, Alabama: Media Mint Publishing, 2010 p83-84.

<sup>61</sup> Sonneborn, Liz *The End of Apartheid* p48.

<sup>62</sup> Study Commission on U. S. Policy toward Southern Africa *South Africa: Time Running Out: The Report of the Study Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa* Berkley: University of California Press, 1981 p62.



subject. I can only guess why at such an early age I felt a sense of unease, a sense that something was amiss in our pleasant garden.<sup>63</sup>

### 3.2.2 White Apartheid Theology

The theological idea of the superiority of one race over another (or over all others) is not unique to apartheid-era South Africa. The concept begins with the idea that God favours one race over others – in South Africa this was understood to mean that God favoured white people over those with darker skin colours. Millard Ericksen describes some of the pseudo theological arguments in favour of this.<sup>64</sup> The most common one is that Noah's son Ham was born black and thus when Noah cursed *his* son, Canaan, asserting that he would serve the descendants of Ham's brothers, this legitimised the enforced servitude of black people by white people.

Another contention is that black people could not be descended from Adam and Eve, as white people are, and therefore could not be considered part of the human race. The assertion is thus that black people are not human beings, but rather animals. A less severe form of this is to see black people as being of a different, inferior human race. While there is no biblical evidence for God ultimately favouring any race to the exclusion of all others, this belief that black people were inherently inferior was held fervently by many white people during the apartheid era.

There are places in ancient rabbinical literature which may have contributed to the belief that black people are under a curse. In particular a collection of midrashim known as Midrash Rabbah-Genesis which is dated somewhere in the third to fourth centuries, but contains material which originated very much earlier contains accounts of Ham being cursed. Similarly, the Babylonian Talmud dated around 500 AD contains an account. These variously suggest that Ham somehow prevented Noah from having a fourth son and so his fourth son was cursed; that Ham broke a rule against sexual activity on the ark and came out black; and that when Ham found Noah drunk he laughed and his children were cursed with blackness and Negroid features.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Datnow, Claire *Behind the Walled Garden* p87.

<sup>64</sup> Ericksen, Millard J. *Christian Theology* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001 p560.

<sup>65</sup> Copher, Charles B. "Three Thousand Years of Biblical Interpretation With Reference to Black People" in *African American Religious Studies: An Interdisciplinary Anthology* (ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore) London: Duke University Press, 1998 p111 also Rogers, J.A. *Sex and Race, Volume 3*:

In South Africa, this apartheid theology was developed and enforced by both academia and the local church.

Robert P. Carroll speaks of the role of the theology faculty at the University of Stellenbosch:

There in the past, godly theologians and churchmen had read their Bibles, taken note of the highly separatist ideology to be found in the Pentateuch, especially in the book of Deuteronomy, and had accordingly constructed a theopolitical ideology of their own for South Africa. In which, white superiority was enthroned over black inferiority, as if such politics were the very will of God for twentieth century South Africans.<sup>66</sup>

In the church, apartheid was given theological expression by the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (also known as the DRC or Dutch Reformed Church.) “Being by far the most popular church among Afrikaners (and in fact among all whites), it was inevitable that attempts to give religious expression to the apartheid world-view would manifest themselves primarily within the DRC.”<sup>67</sup>

One of the voices that needs to be drawn into this contextual space is that of Calvinism, because of its importance for the Afrikaner religion.

South Africans who generally saw themselves as Calvinists, in particular reached their own conclusions on issues such as doctrines, morals and church government. Shaped by their own unique circumstances and living conditions, they developed a unique strand of Reformed religion. While they held Calvin in special regard, Reformed ideas also came to South Africa through the works of Continuing Reformation or Dutch Pietism.<sup>68</sup>

James A. Loader<sup>69</sup> has done a thorough analysis of the way that the NG Church in South Africa used the Bible and its Calvinist theological ancestry to justify the policies of apartheid. It is not necessary for us to comment on the argument, but

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*Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands -- Why White and Black Mix in Spite of Opposition* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014 p316.

<sup>66</sup> Carroll, Robert P. “Rhetorics of a Visit” in *The Bible in Africa: Trajectories and Trends* (ed. Gerald O. West and Musi Dube) Leiden: Brill, 2001 p189.

<sup>67</sup> Kinghorn, Johann “The Theology of Separate Equality: A Critical Outline of the DRC’s Position on Apartheid” in *Christianity Amidst Apartheid* (ed. Martin Prozesky) Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990 p57.

<sup>68</sup> Oliver, Erna “Afrikaner Christianity and the Concept of Empire” in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 1-7, 31(1), 2010 p3.

<sup>69</sup> Loader, James A. “Calvin’s Election Mix In Small-Scale Theology”, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 65(1), Art. #337, 6 pages. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v65i1.337 (pdf Loader, JA) 2009.

it is helpful to understand some of the supposed bases for the ideology, and we will do so in the sections that follow. Loader frequently notes that the hermeneutics are substandard and the logic flawed, nonetheless people found some meaning in these foundations. “The confluence of predestination to everlasting life and election of a chosen people to save the country became the platform of the effort to substantiate the politics of apartheid in a South Africa moulded by Calvinism.” <sup>70</sup>

### 3.2.3 White people are the chosen race

Loader says that the fundamental belief of the NG Church was that white people were God’s chosen race.<sup>71</sup> Just as in biblical times God had chosen Israel to be the people carrying his name and set apart for him, so now the white race had been chosen to take up this responsibility. This originated in the idea that the Afrikaner had had their own Exodus experience when in the ‘Great Trek’ they escaped British rule and travelled to their own land – where the native black inhabitants were seen as the evil Canaanites .<sup>72</sup> They reasoned that Israel had the task of taking God to the other nations and drawing them in and so the white people had the responsibility of bringing the message of salvation to the non-white peoples. Thus, they saw themselves as being entrusted with the message of the gospel for Africa. In order to pass the message on, it was necessary to keep themselves separate, as Israel had been, and so justified the policies of segregation. It is interesting that there is no sense that there might be some white people outside of the church – there seems to be a general equating of white people with the white church.

### 3.2.4 Ethnic groups are decreed by God and may not be mixed

This concept of white people as the chosen race – the magnanimous missionaries to the heathen of Africa, while quite convincing, presented the NG Church with a problem.<sup>73</sup> What should happen to the black converts? Did they become part of the chosen race? This was unthinkable and a memorandum was

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<sup>70</sup> Loader, James A. “Calvin’s Election Mix” p3.

<sup>71</sup> Loader, James A. “Calvin’s Election Mix” p3-4.

<sup>72</sup> Deist, Ferdinand E. “The Dangers of Deuteronomy: A Page from the Reception History of the Book” in *Studies in Deuteronomy: In Honour of C.J.Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (ed. F. Garcia Martinez et al) Leiden: Brill, 1994 p15.

<sup>73</sup> Loader “Calvin’s Election Mix” p4.

written for the Cottesloe-Colloquium in 1960 propounding that God had decreed the existence of different ethnic groups. Because it was God's decree, it would be wrong for people to go against it. As Loader notes, this was lacking in basic logic as the white race itself was a mix of ethnicities, but this seems to have gone unobserved.<sup>74</sup> The principle of God's decree was founded on exegesis of Genesis 10 (the Table of Nations), Genesis 11 (the Tower of Babel) and Deuteronomy 32:8 and Acts 17:26-27, both of which state that God made the nations and set their boundaries. Thus the need for segregation of ethnicities (or actually in practice, races) overrode the need to include black people in the chosen race, even if they did convert to Christianity. Kinghorn notes that the original unity of humanity, all having sprung from Adam and Eve, was also fundamental to the theology of apartheid. However, it was believed that God's plan for humanity was diversity and thus unity was somehow an unachievable ideal and in fact contrary to God's will.<sup>75</sup>

### 3.2.5 God is against intermarriage

In 1961, another memorandum was prepared for the World Council of Churches.<sup>76</sup> In this, the argument that God was against his people marrying outside of their ethnic group was used. The first examples were 'arguments of silence'. Because God did not intervene, it is taken that he approved or even favoured Abraham finding a wife for Isaac from his own clan and Rebekah's dislike for Esau's Canaanite wives. Thus, the memorandum attempts to "give credibility to the idea that ethnic homogeneity is biblically called for."<sup>77</sup>

A further powerful argument in favour of this idea is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. After the return from exile, the Israelites were forced to divorce and expel from the community any wives who were not of Jewish descent.

### 3.2.6 The church is the new Israel

A necessary part of this argument is to make the claim that the Christian church takes up the mantle of Israel from New Testament times.<sup>78</sup> Loader

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<sup>74</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p4.

<sup>75</sup> Kinghorn, Johann "The Theology of Separate Equality" p74-76.

<sup>76</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p4-5.

<sup>77</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p4.

<sup>78</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p5.

summarises the views of H.P Wolmarans, who wrote an article in a church newspaper in 1968, as follows:

We hear continually that Israel should not be spiritualised and about its hopes for this earthly reality; continually the permanence of Israel's election even through the lens of Paul's view in Romans 9–11 is stated and restated. So when Paul says that the church is grafted on Israel and not the other way round (Romans 11:17–24) the church must today take the same actions as ancient Israel.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.2.7 The Blood River covenant

An important part of Israel's notion of being God's chosen people was their covenants with him. Loader says, "As the chosen status of Israel was sealed by a covenant with the patriarchs and at Sinai, so a majority of Calvinists in South Africa regarded themselves as bound to the same God by a formal covenant forged at Blood River in December 1838."<sup>80</sup>

The Battle of Blood River was a military encounter between the Voortrekkers and the Zulu army. Before the battle, the Voortrekkers prayed to God for support and victory. They promised God that if they won the battle they would remember the day with thanksgiving forever after and also that they would build a church in memory of the event.

When the Voortrekkers did win the battle, they saw God as making a covenant with them as he did with Israel in the Old Testament.

Johan Cilliers describes how a church preacher might use this event in a sermon:

Just like Jacob in ancient times went to meet his brother, Esau, but not before he first wrestled with his God .... Exactly so, Blood River is the place where the Voortrekkers personally met their God through the Covenant. It was at Blood River, by taking the Oath of the Covenant, where the Afrikaner nation attained its intimate exclusive Afrikaner-centric acceptance of being God's blessed people.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p5. He uses Wolmarans, H.P. "Die Gronde van Apartheid" in *Die Hervormer*. April 11.15, May 11.23, June 9-10.17, 1968.

<sup>80</sup> Loader "Calvin's Election Mix" p5.

<sup>81</sup> Cilliers, Johan *God for Us: An Analysis and Assessment of Dutch Reformed Preaching During the Apartheid Years* Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2006 p27.

Thus, the architects and proponents of apartheid saw themselves as a covenant people. Their alliance with God was holy and absolute and the claims of this alliance were greater than anything outside of the covenant. This helped give apartheid's followers a certain fervour and often militancy.

In closing this section, it should be understood that the theology of apartheid was not the foundation of apartheid, but rather its legitimisation. Kinghorn says

The real contribution of the DRC as an institution was not at the level of activism. The real contribution lies in the fact that the DRC had allowed the apartheid world-view to be expressed in theological language, thereby legitimising it and eventually, through the process of doctrinalisation since 1950, canonising it in terms of the all-embracing conceptual framework of the diversity of nations.<sup>82</sup>

### 3.2.8 D.F. Malan – One of the Architects of Apartheid

In order to build an understanding of the input space to our blends and an understanding of our interpretive context we tend to assume a measure of homogeneity. Using specific examples of specific significant individuals allows us to move beyond generalisations and to have at least a few touch points into the lives and thinking (or ideo-theological realities) of actual people. I have chosen D.F. Malan to represent the Afrikaner. He was active before the period of the 1970s and 80s, but it was his work and that of his compatriots which created the situation leading to the struggle.

#### ***Birth, childhood, background***

Daniël Francois Malan was born on 22 May in 1874, the child of Daniël senior and Anna Malan, née du Toit. He was the second surviving child – three of his siblings died in infancy. He had an older and a younger sister and two younger brothers. Both of his parents were from Huguenot stock and were Afrikaans-speaking.<sup>83</sup>

His parents' farm, Allesverloren, located just outside the town of Riebeeck West in the southwestern part of the then Cape Colony, was situated on the slopes of Kasteelberg and offered him a panoramic view of the Swartland's plain, which were hemmed by great mountains in the distance: the

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<sup>82</sup> Kinghorn, Johann "The Theology of Separate Equality" p79.

<sup>83</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan and the Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2014 p2-3.

Elandskloof, the Groot Winterveld and the Koue Bokkeveld ranges. In summer it would be unbearably hot, dry and dusty, forcing the inhabitants to seek refuge in the shade. . . The world there is rugged and silent, leaving the individual feeling infinitesimal.<sup>84</sup>

### **Education**

Malan attended the public school at Riebeeck West. The school did not teach matric and so he finished his schooling in Stellenbosch at the Stellenbosch Gymnasium. He completed a BA in Mathematics and Science at Victoria College and then studied at the Stellenbosch Theological Seminary. Finally, he studied at the University of Utrecht and obtained his doctorate.<sup>85</sup> In 1905, he was ordained as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>86</sup>

### **Family**

Malan married Mattie van Tonder in June 1926, when he was 52 years old. She bore two sons before she died in 1930, possibly of rheumatic fever. In 1937, Malan married Maria Ann Sophia Louw.<sup>87</sup>

He died in Stellenbosch in 1959.

### **Influences**

D.F. Malan did not personally participate in the Anglo-Boer (also known as the South African) war of 1899 which was somewhat removed from Afrikaners living in the Cape. He chose instead to study in Holland and there he found wide scale support for the Afrikaner cause and dislike of the British.<sup>88</sup> As with many Afrikaners, the South African War became a defining moment on his life. Cobus van Wyngaard describes this as being almost like another covenant for the Afrikaner:

If the *laager* at Blood River runs as a continuing thread throughout the development of Afrikaner nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the war of 1899 to 1902 is the defining moment in the formation of Afrikaner identity. This event is generally regarded as having provided the vital stimulus for the development of Afrikaner nationalism as a mass movement. Bosch writes, "For Britain, the war was no more than a passing episode; for Afrikaners, who lost eight times as many women and children in

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<sup>84</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p1.

<sup>85</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p7,8,14,52.

<sup>86</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p54.

<sup>87</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p226, 231,242,244-245, 314-319.

<sup>88</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p28-30.

the concentration camps as soldiers on the battlefield, this was the most crucial event in their history, the matrix out of which a new people was born.”<sup>89</sup>

Malan also lived through both World Wars and experienced the nationalistic feelings generated by them.

### **Contribution**

The comprehensive web site *S A History Online* summarises Malan’s significance in a few words, describing how he entered the public sphere and then became leader of the South African government.

In 1915 the newspaper ‘Die Burger’ was founded and Malan became its first editor, using it as a springboard for entry into parliament. He was appointed Minister of the Interior in the Hertzog government of 1924. Malan strongly opposed moves to form a coalition between the National Party and Jan Smut’s South African Party in 1933, and rejected the resulting ‘fusion’ government formed in 1934. He was also a leader in the creation of the ‘Purified’ National Party, which initially consisted of the few Afrikaner parliamentarians who refused to follow Hertzog or Smuts. Ten years later this new National Party had gained enough strength to defeat the Union Party in the 1948 elections.<sup>90</sup>

### **What he believed**

Lindie Koorts writes in the introduction to her biography of D.F. Malan that the observer will be struck as much by what is absent from the story of Malan’s life as by what is present.<sup>91</sup> That which is absent is any reference to black politics or any real communication between the racial spheres. Malan was absorbed in matters of Afrikaner survival and Afrikaner politics. The black South Africans amongst whom he lived were apparently virtually irrelevant to him.

During Malan’s period in Holland, the period of the South African War, he became convinced that God had called him to the cause of the Afrikaner nation. He wrote the following in a letter to a friend in 1903:

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<sup>89</sup> Van Wyngaard, Cobus “White Theology Amidst White Rhetoric on Violence” in *Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa* (ed. Drew Smith et al) Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015 p98. He is quoting Bosch, David J. “The Afrikaner and South Africa” in *Theology Today*, 1986 p207.

<sup>90</sup> South African History Online: Towards a Peoples’ History *Daniel Francois Malan* available online <http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/daniel-francois-malan>, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p xiii.



Our nation, in spite of the praises of the non-English-speaking world, is substantially deprived of men of principle. We have many reapers who are all too ready to collect the fruits and honours. But we have few sowers, who know that they will not reap but nevertheless sow as if they shall reap. Everyone grasps at that which is at hand, he stretches his hand out to what is nearest, he pursues that which he himself can see and can enjoy. Few are content to build, unseen and unknown, the sure and stable foundations of a building whose completion they will not see, to live for an idea, to die for an ideal whose realisation they can prepare for but which they themselves will not see. I have undertaken to myself to use my weak powers to work for the Afrikaner nation and not to budge one inch from my path. To make it clear to the nation that God is also the Sovereign of its history, and that he needs to be recognised as such in the national life – this is as much an extension of God's kingdom as it is to preach the Gospel to the heathens. But lately nothing has become clearer to me than that the man who wants to work for the Afrikaner nation's ability to develop itself on its own terms, so that it can be its own nation with its own history, language, character and ideals, that would in its own manner embody the Kingdom of God in itself, that that man would be held up by heavy resistance, not least from his own nation. He will be seen as an extremist, a fanatic, one who is petty-minded.<sup>92</sup>

Koorts points out that Malan's reference to being a petty-minded fanatic comes from an idea of his mentor J.J.P. Valeton Jr. He compared religion to politics by comparing Elijah to Ahab. He felt that Ahab was probably, on the whole, a more likable figure, while Elijah would have been seen as petty-minded and a fanatic. Thus, Malan was here committing himself to the role of being an Elijah for the Afrikaner nation.<sup>93</sup>

In another letter, Malan describes his idea of the relationship between the English and the Afrikaner:

One can point to the fact that there exists a broad basis – love of South Africa as fatherland and the maintenance of her interests above those of all other countries – on which English speakers and Afrikaners can work together ... What I mean is this: that the government has to acknowledge that S.A. is a country inhabited by two white nationalities who stand independently alongside each other, and that both are free and do not reign over one another ... together, Afrikaner and English South Africans form a *South African nation* on the broad basis of 'South Africa my fatherland'. The nation thus consists of *two* sections or, rather, two different nations, who *do not*

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<sup>92</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p41.

<sup>93</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p38-39.

*stand opposite* one another but *independently next to* each other. You would have noticed that I distinguish between *Afrikaners* and *South Africans*.<sup>94</sup>

As D.F. Malan lay dying, he was asked what he thought his greatest achievement was:

For a while there was silence, and then, his voice audibly strained, Malan answered: 'That I could serve my nation; that I could unite my people. The Lord has granted me that'.<sup>95</sup>

### **3.3 Black Consciousness**

When we talk about 'The Struggle' in South Africa, we refer to the efforts to bring about the end of apartheid and its oppressive legislation.

While the laws that defined apartheid were passed following the National Party's rise to power in 1948 there were already laws in place which discriminated against black people - such as the pass laws, limitation of franchise and the Natives Land Act of 1913 which refused them the right to own land in the same way that white people could.<sup>96</sup> In spite of all of this, black people had limited representation in parliament and fought against the systematic taking away of their rights, using the political avenues open to them. In this period, the African National Congress came into being as a movement representing the indigenous people of South Africa. Peter Walshe in his history of the ANC<sup>97</sup> and other movements of the time writes:

By the end of the war, Congress had therefore prepared a full statement of its policy, a programme of radical and sweeping reforms which was unanimously adopted by the annual conference. What was wanted in practice, when all the dust of annual conventions had settled, was a gradual but assured abandonment of existing Government policy. The statement set out the long-term goals that were to be pursued with an increasing intransigence in the face of their complete rejection by Smuts and later by Malan and his Nationalist Government. After working in harmony with the elected members of the NRC[Native Representative Council] to no good effect, and after unsuccessfully seeking discussions with Smuts on the reorientation of Native policy, Congress was forced back on its own determination to organise for the social, economic and political emancipation of the African people it claimed to

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<sup>94</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p47-48.

<sup>95</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p xi.

<sup>96</sup> A list of discriminatory laws can be found at *The Nelson Mandela Foundation of Memory* e.g. <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01646/05lv01703.htm>.

<sup>97</sup> African National Congress. At the time of writing this political party (formerly liberation movement) governs South Africa in co-operation with two smaller partners.

represent. It was simply a matter of time before a major confrontation would develop with the authorities.<sup>98</sup>

As it became more and more obvious that freedom was not going to be obtained by diplomatic means, other tactics needed to be attempted. Black Consciousness was a mindset which enabled black people to develop new ways to work together towards liberation.

Racial discrimination was not unique to South Africa and a theology developed in North America which was adopted and adapted to African situations. This was Black Theology which was a “particular theological response and is correlative to a unique situation of racial domination and oppression.”<sup>99</sup> It obviously became impossible for thinking, black Christians to accept apartheid theology as *the* correct Christian theology. As they developed their own theological underpinnings for their understanding of their daily experiences, oppression, suffering and liberation were necessarily shaping forces. Black Theology “is thus a passionate call to freedom; it invites all the people of colour to authentic human existence and freedom in God’s name.”<sup>100</sup> While apartheid theology arose from the need to legitimise a political system or a worldview, Black Theology arose as a resistance to a political system or worldview.

Since the assault on blacks was not limited to the economic, social and physical areas but extended to include ideological manipulation, which took – among many others – a theological form, black Christians, pastors and theologians were called upon to respond theologically to counteract and restrict the mental damage to black Christians.<sup>101</sup>

Simon Maimela explains that in South Africa, Black Theology began with black theologians who from 1970 to 1980 wrote, preached and led organisations in the cause of black solidarity. As the trend towards black solidarity thinking grew, two streams developed: the ‘Black Solidarity-Materialist’ trend and the ‘non-racist’ trend.<sup>102</sup> The first of these became twinned with Black Consciousness and is the

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<sup>98</sup> Walshe, Peter *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress, 1912-1952* Berkley: University of California Press, 1970 p274.

<sup>99</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” in *Initiation into Theology* (ed. Simon Maimela & Adrio Konig) Pretoria: JL van Schaik, 1998 p111.

<sup>100</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p113.

<sup>101</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso “Black Theology in South Africa” in *Initiation into Theology* (ed. Simon Maimela & Adrio Konig) Pretoria: JL van Schaik, 1998 p50.

<sup>102</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p114-116.

subject of this section. Maimela says, "Black Theology is parasitic on and builds on black consciousness."<sup>103</sup>

Gerald West describes two phases of the development of Black Theology in terms of their use of the Bible. In the first phase, during the 1970's, "the Bible was predominantly appropriated by the side of the liberation struggle. But in the 1980's, a second phase of Black Theology raised serious questions about this."<sup>104</sup> This second phase found many passages of the Bible to be oppressive in nature and so the use of the Bible was held in suspicion. For the purposes of our study, our focus will be on those who believed that the Bible had relevance to the situation in which black people found themselves, while acknowledging that there are others who would say that this is not possible.

Justin Ukpong interprets Desmond Tutu's understanding of this in these words:

Because the Bible had been wrongly used as an instrument to entrench the apartheid system, it remains central to Black theology in its struggle for liberation. Its point of departure is that the Bible basically contains a liberating message, that apartheid is diametrically opposed to the central message of the Bible which is love of the neighbour, and that God is always on the side of the oppressed and therefore in support of the Black liberation struggle (Tutu 1979:166, Boesak 1984:149-160.) Liberative themes in the Bible are studied as a resource of empowerment for the liberation struggle.<sup>105</sup>

Black Consciousness contains the implicit understanding that black people have value and human dignity. They are not white people with black skins, but have their own unique worth and identity. Black people need to stand together in order to free themselves from oppressive systems and structures. Black is beautiful. Black Consciousness also has some explicit understandings, which are described below.

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<sup>103</sup> Maimela, Simon "Black Theology" p115.

<sup>104</sup> West, Gerald O. "Contending with the Bible: Biblical Interpretation as a Site of Struggle in South Africa" in *The Bible in the Public Square* (ed. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge et al) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008 p109.

<sup>105</sup> Ukpong, Justin "Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa" p20. He references Tutu, Desmond "The Theology of Liberation in Africa" in *African Theology en Route* (ed. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres) New York: Orbis Books, 1979 p166 and Boesak, Allan *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition* Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1984 p149-160.

### 3.3.1 Black people as agents of change

The apartheid government put out the notion that white people were the chosen and were required to order the lives of black people. The Bible was also often interpreted as saying that God alone was in charge of history. Black Theology brought the conviction that black people were able to bring about change in their own lives and in their own history. They were co-workers with God to bring about liberation.

They work with God in the historical destruction of structures, institutions and attitudes that make acquisitions of life and dignity by black people impossible. Black Christians – men and women, young and old – are shown biblically that they should be on the cutting edge of the struggle . . .<sup>106</sup>

Just as apartheid emphasised white people's so-called God-given right to be the chosen race, Black Theology emphasises the God-given right and obligation of black people to believe in themselves and to redefine the world in which they live.

Tinyiko Maluleke describes how Black theologians started to take action by reclaiming the Bible:

Nevertheless Black theologians like him and Mosala opt to attempt the difficult (and some would say impossible) task of 'shaping the Bible into a formidable weapon' so that although it was used to take the land of Black people away, it may now be used to get it back. It is noteworthy that it was not the pull of the Bible or its contents *per se* that led to this position but it was the situation of limited ideological options which left Black theologians and Black Christians alike with few other options.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3.2 Solidarity of black people and only black people

Antjie Krog reports on an interview with an unnamed black author which gives life to the concept of black solidarity. She was asking him about a part of his book where a murder has occurred and someone has reported the murderers.

“Why does your main character condemn the splitter and not the murderers?”  
“Because black people must always stick together.”  
“But the woman who saw a white man running away from Chris Hani’s dead body didn’t say, ‘He was white, so I’ll shut up.’ She said, ‘The deed is wrong, so I’ll speak out.’”

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<sup>106</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso “Black Theology” p51

<sup>107</sup> Maluleke, Tinyiko S. “What If We Are Mistaken about Bible and Christianity in Africa?” in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village* (ed. J. Ukpong et al) Atlanta: SBL, 2002 p166. The theologians to whom he refers are Takatso Mafokeng and Itumeleng Mosala.

He looks at me. “No one can destroy whites – they have survival in their bones. But for us, if we don’t stand together no matter what, we’ll be wiped out.”<sup>108</sup>

Maimela contributes an explanation of solidarity that is difficult for many people to accept:

... the philosophy of black consciousness is the basis in forging black solidarity in the struggle for the liberation of oppressed blacks. . . such a liberation cannot be effected by whites, however sympathetic they might be to the cause of the black struggle. This is because whites lack the fundamental existential experience of what it means to suffer humiliation and oppression as blacks under white power structures.<sup>109</sup>

### 3.3.3 Oppression primarily due to class divisions

An additional understanding is that oppression under apartheid was essentially to do with class divisions rather than racism. Because the class distinctions were determined by racial divisions, oppression appeared to be racially driven, but actually the oppression was materially and economically driven. Maimela says:

In other words, it is the systematic concentration of material wealth and political power in the hands of the white race which has enabled it to propagate and perpetuate a rigid racially-based class structure in South Africa.<sup>110</sup>

It is this understanding that is fuelling the current cry of those in Black Consciousness movements for redistribution of wealth. In their thinking political liberation and empowerment is not enough, it is now necessary for black people to be economically liberated and empowered.

There are two important emphases in Black Theology, which follow.

### 3.3.4 The conflict due to racial domination cannot be ignored and should be central

Black Theology attempts to overturn what it believes to be a feature of traditional theologies – that racial conflict is just another difficulty encountered in living the Christian life.<sup>111</sup> Rather it believes that this conflict should be seen as

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<sup>108</sup> Krog, Antjie *Country of My Skull* Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2009 p12.

<sup>109</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p115.

<sup>110</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p116.

<sup>111</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p116-117.

central to theological and ecclesiological discussion. Tutu sees the theological importance of liberation in this way:

African and Black theology must be concerned – and vitally concerned – with liberation because as we have shown, liberation is a serious preoccupation at the present time and it is not seen as being an alternative to personal salvation in Jesus Christ. No, it is seen in Africa as the inescapable consequence of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ seriously.<sup>112</sup>

It is easily understood that the oppressor (and those who benefit from this oppression) may not see this as a priority and thus the rising up of the oppressed to set new priorities can seem radical and confrontational. The logical follow through of this resetting of priorities, particularly given its confrontational nature could be black supremacy and ultimately black domination. Black Theology however affirms a commitment to reconciliation between races.

Black Theology contends that it is as people candidly face the racial factors that breed alienation and conflict that they will be open to the transformative power of the gospel, which will lead whites and blacks to acquire qualitatively new ways of becoming human in their relationships to one another.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.3.5 God is on the side of the oppressed and the marginalised

In this emphasis, Black Theology acknowledges its parent, Liberation Theology. The belief is that God favours the poor and those who are oppressed.<sup>114</sup> The Exodus story and particularly the story of the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery is fundamental to the theological expression of this emphasis – although as Allan Boesak points out, the black people were not planning to go anywhere, but were staying right where they were.<sup>115</sup> Another foundation is the birth of Jesus Christ in a stable, to poor parents. God's act in leaving his glorious kingdom and humbling himself to be born as a human slave is seen as the ultimate confession of God's preference for the disadvantaged. This gives rise to new life and hope for black people.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches* (ed. Mthobisi Mutloatse) Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986 p58.

<sup>113</sup> Maimela, Simon "Black Theology" p117.

<sup>114</sup> Maimela, Simon "Black Theology" p118-119.

<sup>115</sup> Boesak, Allan "Liberation Theology in South Africa" in *African Theology en Route* (ed. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres) New York: Orbis Books, 1979 p173.

<sup>116</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso A. *The Crucified Among the Crossbearers: Towards a Black Christology* Kampen: J H Kok, 1983 p41.

In fact, as Jesus begins his ministry and begins to show his power, it is evident that he could, if he chose, side with the rich and the educated and the powerful. It is also evident that he chose to associate with 'sinners' – those who were outcasts and of low social standing. This was not by chance, but by choice and so Black Theology affirms God's choice to associate with (and to identify with) outcasts – in this case, with black South Africans. The sense that the all-powerful God has sided with the disempowered is encouraging and psychologically liberating.<sup>117</sup> In theory, at least, this sense of God's preference for the oppressed, should also lead to black people never, themselves, becoming oppressors. Maimela summarises the principle like this:

This critical principle is rooted in the divine principle and God's special concern for the disadvantaged, who cannot enforce their rights and defend their dignity in a racially dominated society. It aims to provide guidance for Christians working for justice for everyone before, during and after social revolution so that new rulers are prevented from becoming oppressors themselves in the newly created social order by reminding us all that God is offended by human oppressors.<sup>118</sup>

### 3.3.6 Desmond Mphilo Tutu – A Leader of the Struggle

The chosen real-life character for Black Consciousness is Desmond Mphilo Tutu. He was associated with the early development of Black Theology in Southern Africa and his vocal and charismatic support helped Black Consciousness to become a powerful force in South Africa.

#### ***Birth, childhood, background***

Desmond Tutu was born in 1931, the child of Zacheriah Zililo Tutu and Aletta Tutu. He had two sisters and no brothers. His father was a Xhosa of the amaMfengu tribe and the Tshezi clan. His mother was born a Motswana but she adopted her husband's clan and language and Desmond was brought up speaking isiXhosa.<sup>119</sup>

Desmond Tutu's birthplace at Makoeteng in South Africa's North West Province is easy to visit. A short walk from the busy shops and offices of Klerksdorp, a town founded by white settlers in the nineteenth century, it is a peaceful spot, flat but near a rocky koppie, or small hill, covered with bushes and trees where the children of the black township played. At the foot of the

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<sup>117</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso A. *The Crucified* p41.

<sup>118</sup> Maimela, Simon "Black Theology" p119.

<sup>119</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p11-14.



hill are the remains of a plantation of eucalyptus trees. Here, until Desmond was four, his older sister, Sylvia, collected fallen branches to make a fire at which they would warm themselves on cold winter mornings in the Highveld. With the help of a resident, the visitor can trace the foundations of the house in which Desmond was born – the place where, according to African tradition, his umbilical cord was buried.<sup>120</sup>

## **Education**

Desmond Tutu attended Johannesburg Bantu High School<sup>121</sup> where he wrote the JMB matric exam (considered to be a high standard exam and written by private schools) where he scored well enough to be admitted to the University of Witwatersrand to study medicine.<sup>122</sup> Unfortunately, his family could not afford the fees, and he instead studied to be a teacher, obtaining his teacher's diploma from Pretoria Bantu Normal College in 1954 and he later completed his BA through the University of South Africa.<sup>123</sup>

He became disenchanted with teaching when the apartheid government enforced low standards on black students and teachers. He left teaching and studied theology at St Peter's Theological College and became a priest in the Anglican Church in 1961. He then went to London and studied at King's College where he received Honours and Masters degrees.<sup>124</sup>

## **Family**

Desmond Tutu married Nomalizo Leah Shenxane in 1955 and they had four children, all of whom were educated in Swaziland.<sup>125</sup>

## **Contribution**

The contribution that Desmond Tutu made in the fight for freedom in South Africa was considerable. When he was given the Nobel Prize in 1984, this was said about him:

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<sup>120</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p9.

<sup>121</sup> From his biography on the Nobel Prize web page  
[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1984/tutu-bio.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1984/tutu-bio.html).

<sup>122</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p47-48.

<sup>123</sup> From his biography on the *Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation* web page  
<http://www.tutufoundationusa.org/about-desmond-tutu/>.

<sup>124</sup> *Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation*.

<sup>125</sup> *Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation*.

In 1975 he was appointed Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg, the first black to hold that position. From 1976 to 1978 he was Bishop of Lesotho, and in 1978 became the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Tutu is an honorary doctor of a number of leading universities in the USA, Britain and Germany.

Desmond Tutu has formulated his objective as "a democratic and just society without racial divisions", and has set forward the following points as minimum demands:

1. equal civil rights for all
2. the abolition of South Africa's passport laws
3. a common system of education
4. the cessation of forced deportation from South Africa to the so-called "homelands"<sup>126</sup>

The fact that he was awarded the Nobel Prize speaks for itself. Beyond that he played important roles in the South African Council of Churches and subsequently as chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the years after the struggle.<sup>127</sup>

### ***What he believed***

A key characteristic of Desmond Tutu's approach to the struggle was his belief in the possibility of unity in diversity and he expressed it in his desire to be all things to all people, much as Paul of the New Testament described himself to be. His speaking and writing demonstrated a good understanding of the different points of view.

Speaking about unity, Tutu says:

"How wonderful it would be if we could relax in our acceptance by God, so that we could then be free to accept others, to affirm them, to exult in their goodness and beauty, in their gifts without feeling threatened and jealous and inadequate because we too have our gifts, our strengths, because we too are loved forever by God."<sup>128</sup>

Buti Tlhagale writes, however, that he did not believe it possible for Tutu to achieve his desire.<sup>129</sup> He believed that this would lead to being a neutral party,

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<sup>126</sup> *Nobel Prize Biography*.

<sup>127</sup> *Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation, Nobel Prize Biography*.

<sup>128</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p78.

<sup>129</sup> Tlhagale, Buti "Desmond Tutu: Priest, Elder and Prophet" in *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speeches* (ed. Mothobi Mutloatse) Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986 p xiv.

whereas Tutu was, in fact, sincerely in favour of black liberation and saw the theme of liberation as being one that permeated the Bible. In an address to Pretoria University in 1981, he said this:

The image of deliverance, of rescuing, of being set free, of being bought as a captive is redeemed, when one has been kidnapped – this imagery forms an important, indeed a crucial part of how the New Testament describes the saving and atoning work of Jesus.<sup>130</sup>

For him, liberating people was not just something that is read about in the Bible, but is fundamental to God's character and to his activity within human history.

However, he saw disunity as a problem in achieving liberation. His thoughts about unity did not only consider racial divides, but also class divides. He resisted the attempts of the dispensation to divide black people into urban blacks and rural blacks as they began to consider the inclusion of urban black people. He believed that fragmentation of the black community was part of divide and rule tactics.<sup>131</sup>

Tlhagale acknowledges that, "Indeed far from promoting the myth of unity within the black community, he has laid bare the inconsistencies that plague the community. If there is to be unity at all, it must ultimately be based on the value of justice."<sup>132</sup>

Tlhagale did not believe that Tutu's attempts to show understanding of the white apartheid position were honest, but were rather a ploy to sow doubt in the ranks of those who held that position. "Tutu, himself an exponent of Black Consciousness, addresses the white community only to be a cause of dissension so that those within the white laager realise that a 'man's enemies are those of his own household.'"<sup>133</sup> However, Tlhagale apparently contradicts himself as on only the previous page he writes, "His indefatigable pursuit of dialogue with members of the white ruling class bears abundant testimony to his commitment to unity."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p62.

<sup>131</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p45.

<sup>132</sup> Tlhagale, Buti "Desmond Tutu" p xv.

<sup>133</sup> Tlhagale, Buti "Desmond Tutu" p xiv.

<sup>134</sup> Tlhagale, Buti "Desmond Tutu" p xiv.

Tutu saw part of the story this way, “White South Africa . . . Don’t delay our freedom, which is your freedom as well, for freedom is indivisible.”<sup>135</sup>

Speaking of freedom Tutu always said that white people were just as oppressed as black people were. Many people would probably say that he was very generous towards white people. But, as he predicts a future Bill of Rights guaranteeing individual liberty he also says, “There will be no forced integration which I abhor as much as I do enforced separation.”<sup>136</sup>

It may be that Tlhagale was not so much concerned about Tutu’s desire or otherwise for genuine unity as about the effectiveness of his approach. Many people felt that Tutu was on a fool’s errand trying to bring about peaceful change. Tlhagale expresses his doubt as follows, “And so he even talks to the Pharaoh himself, relentlessly pursuing the model of Moses of the tribe of Levi. But surely the Bishop knows that the latter day Pharaohs, like the Pharaoh of Old, will not relent until they are overtaken by the merciless hand of violence.”<sup>137</sup>

It is interesting that unity for Tutu did not mean unity of thought. In a speech to Diakonia he stressed that black people and white people were inevitably going to see God and Jesus in different lights. He spoke of the need for contextual theology, and believes that different theologies are appropriate for different times.<sup>138</sup>

Black and White Christians look at Jesus Christ and they see a different reality. It is almost like beauty which is said to be in the eye of the beholder. It depends on who and where you are, what is going to be pertinent for you.<sup>139</sup>

This point of view is very relevant to this thesis as we seek to look at the Bible passage from different points of view. It is here we are reminded that a person’s theology is affected by their context – giving them a certain ideo-theological position - and this then affects their understanding of scripture.

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<sup>135</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p56.

<sup>136</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p85.

<sup>137</sup> Tlhagale, Buti “Desmond Tutu” p xv.

<sup>138</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p57.

<sup>139</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p63.

### 3.4 The Kairos Document

The Kairos Document represents a possible third voice from our South African perspective. Unlike the previous two categories – where, in general, the supporters of apartheid had white skins and the proponent of Black Consciousness had darker skins, this category includes people of all races. The key feature of theologians and Christians in this category is that they were committed to a non-racial or a multi-racial society in South Africa. Many of these people were part of the South African Council of Churches, or part of the United Democratic Front. Some came from a Black Theology background – or called themselves proponents of Black Theology – but differed from some within Black Consciousness in that they believed that it was possible for people of all races to work together.<sup>140</sup> Some were from traditionally white denominations.

This is the third voice that we consider in the South African set of voices and is, largely, where my voice fits. More vocal white people who would have fitted in this category include Michael Cassidy and Albert Nolan. Desmond Tutu would also be at home in this category.

Tutu described a foretaste of his own vision for South Africa:

I will always have a lump in my throat when I think of the children at St Mary's, pointers to what can be if our society would but become sane and normal. Here were children of all races playing, praying and learning and even fighting together, almost uniquely in South Africa. And as I have knelt in the Dean's stall at the superb 9.30 High Mass with incense, bells and everything watching a multiracial crowd file up to the altar rails to be communicated, the one bread and the one cup by a mixed team of clergy and lay ministers, with a multiracial choir, servers and sidesmen – all this in apartheid mad South Africa, then tears sometimes streamed down my cheeks, tears of joy that it could be that indeed Jesus Christ had broken down the walls of partition.<sup>141</sup>

The Freedom Charter, which was adopted by “the largest gathering of black leadership in South African history, the ‘Congress of the People’”, in 1955<sup>142</sup> declares some of the common ground of this group of moderate Christians.

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<sup>140</sup> Maimela, Simon “Black Theology” p116.

<sup>141</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p34.

<sup>142</sup> Cassidy, Michael *The Passing Summer* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989 p482.

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

- that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;
- that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
- that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;
- that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore, we the people of South Africa, black and white together – equals, countrymen and brothers – adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until the democratic changes set out here have won.<sup>143</sup>

Another document that significantly represented this group of moderate, collaborative Christians was the Kairos Document published in 1985. Jonathan Draper describes the document and its impact:

One of the decisive moments for the involvement of the church – a term that is used here generically to include the full variety of denominations and movements – was the publication in 1985 of the *Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*. The document was signed by a number of eminent theologians and provoked a flurry of debate in both church and society- occasioning a full-scale attack by the apartheid government and conservative churches on theologians and church leaders who supported it. However its challenge also inspired a new generation of conscientized and radicalized Christians to participate alongside secular liberation movements in the struggle to remove apartheid. In the great demonstration that accompanied and hastened its demise, bishops, moderators, clergy, and Christian activists inspired by the message of the *Kairos Document* marched alongside other religious and secular movements, often at the front.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Cassidy *The Passing Summer* p482.

<sup>144</sup> Draper, Jonathan "Biblical Hermeneutics in a Secular Age: Reflections from South Africa Twenty Years after the *Kairos Document*" in *The Bible in the Public Square: Reading the Signs of the Times* (ed. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge et al) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008 p39-40.

This document offered a critique of what it called state theology and church theology and recommended that the church rather develop what it called a prophetic theology. It also presented an action plan for the church.

Although Ukpong sees this as a product of Black Theology,<sup>145</sup> this conversation is very typical of this third group. In order to get a feel for this group we have a look at some of the elements of the Kairos Document.<sup>146</sup>

### 3.4.1 State Theology

Chapter 2 of the Kairos Document is entitled “Critique of State Theology.” In summary, this section of the document holds that the state is over confident of the relevance of Romans 13:1-7 to the situation; it is overconfident in its use of the concept of law and order to give it its authority; it illegitimately uses the threat of communism to label all opposition as evil; and lastly its claim to be acting in the name of the Christian God.

For years, the state had been seen as essentially Christian and the separation of church and state had not been an issue – to consider disobedience to the state was a huge step for many Christians to make.

Desmond Tutu took a lead on this and he believed strongly that the church should be very distinct from the state – not surprisingly given the close relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and the apartheid government.

The Church is constantly tempted to be conformed to the world, to want influence that comes from power, prestige and privilege, and it forgets all the while that its Lord and Master was born in a stable, that the message of the angels about his birth was announced first, not to the high and mighty but to the simple rustic shepherds.<sup>147</sup>

He saw the temptation to gain power and prestige by collaborating with the ruling authorities as highly dangerous. The church should rather remember the example of Jesus who became friends with the outcasts and the oppressed.

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<sup>145</sup> Ukpong, Justin “Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa.”

<sup>146</sup> This is not by any means a complete treatment of the Kairos Document. The Document may be read in its entirety online at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/challenge-church-theological-comment-political-crisis-south-africa-kairos-document-1985>. Accessed 21/08/2016.

<sup>147</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p64.

Besides, he said, when the time came for that oppressive rule to be overthrown, the church would also lose everything.<sup>148</sup>

He preached that the church should favour neither oppression nor division:

The Church must be ever ready to wash the disciples' feet, a serving Church, not a triumphalistic Church, biased in favour of the powerless to be their voice, to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, the marginalised ones – yes, preaching the gospel of reconciliation but working for justice first, since there can never be real reconciliation without justice.<sup>149</sup>

He was convinced that a church that sided with the poor could never be wealthy and was more likely to be characterised by suffering. “A Church that does not suffer is a contradiction in terms if it is not marked by the cross and inspired by the Holy Spirit. It must be ready to die for only so can it share in Christ's passion so as to share in his resurrection.”<sup>150</sup>

Should there be any doubt, Tutu did not believe that the church's separation from state meant that the church should not be involved in politics. He saw those that called for religion and politics to be kept apart as those who refused to be accountable for their actions.<sup>151</sup> He believed that people had vested interests and were quite happy to mix religion and politics if this furthered their own ends.

Tutu taught that whatever the church and the state might think, God included the state in his area of authority:

Caesar must be accorded what is appropriate for him and God must have all – including Caesar's domain; otherwise there would be a part of the universe, of life which did not fall under God's control.<sup>152</sup>

### 3.4.2 Reconciliation

Chapter Three of the Kairos Document is entitled “Critique of Church Theology”. It explains itself to be a result of an analysis of common themes or theological assumptions which the authors found to be running through the speeches and press statements of the so-called English-speaking churches.

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<sup>148</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p64.

<sup>149</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p65.

<sup>150</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p65.

<sup>151</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p67.

<sup>152</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p77.



The Kairos document finds fault with church leaders who recognised the error of apartheid but who spoke as if everything could be resolved if everyone would just get together to talk it over.

The fallacy here is that 'Reconciliation' has been made into an absolute principle that must be applied in all cases of conflict or dissension. But not all cases of conflict are the same. We can imagine a private quarrel between two people or two groups whose differences are based upon misunderstandings. In such cases it would be appropriate to talk and negotiate to sort out the misunderstandings and to reconcile the two sides. But there are other conflicts in which one side is right and the other wrong. There are conflicts where one side is a fully armed and violent oppressor while the other side is defenceless and oppressed. There are conflicts that can only be described as the struggle between justice and injustice, good and evil, God and the devil. To speak of reconciling these two is not only a mistaken application of the Christian idea of reconciliation, it is a total betrayal of all that Christian faith has ever meant.<sup>153</sup>

Many moderate Christians were wary of sticking their necks out, but it became clear that solutions were not going to be found using 'quiet diplomacy'<sup>154</sup> and Christians realised that to pursue a multi-racial future a radical reconciliation would be needed. At the very least, before reconciliation could be achieved, the vast injustices in South African society needed to be removed and the oppressive government needed to show repentance.

### 3.4.3 Justice

Church leaders recognised the huge injustices of the apartheid system and were not silent in their opposition. However, the Kairos document states that these calls for justice were ineffective and misguided. These calls for justice were made as calls for political reform, but political leaders were only listening with half an ear and it never seemed likely that they were going to alter radically the unjust structures and systems that supported apartheid.

At the heart of this approach is the reliance upon 'individual conversions' in response to 'moralizing demands' to change the structures of a society. It has not worked and it never will work. The present crisis with all its cruelty, brutality and callousness is ample proof of the ineffectiveness of years and years of Christian 'moralizing' about the need for love. The problem that we

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<sup>153</sup> From chapter three of the *Kairos Document*.

<sup>154</sup> 'Quiet diplomacy' was a term used by a later President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, for his way of dealing with a disintegrating political situation in Zimbabwe. This involved discussions outside of the limelight of public view.

are dealing with here in South Africa is not merely a problem of personal guilt, it is a problem of structural injustice. People are suffering, people are being maimed and killed and tortured every day.<sup>155</sup>

The Kairos document appeals to the Exodus story for its biblical validation of this concept. As God did not rescue the Israelites by causing Pharaoh to bring about political reform, so he could not be expected to rescue South Africa in this way.

#### 3.4.4 Non-violence

Most Christians see their religion as a way of peace and church leaders did all that they could to condemn violence in any form. Unfortunately, they were faced with government leaders who practised violent behaviour and excused it or denied it. Clever terminology hid the true extent of what was happening from the public's minds.

The problem for the Church here is the way the word violence is being used in the propaganda of the State. The State and the media have chosen to call violence what some people do in the townships as they struggle for their liberation i.e. throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killing collaborators. But this excludes the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the State and especially the oppressive and naked violence of the police and the army. These things are not counted as violence. And even when they are acknowledged to be 'excessive,' they are called 'misconduct' or even 'atrocities' but never violence. Thus the phrase 'Violence in the townships' comes to mean what the young people are doing and not what the police are doing or what apartheid in general is doing to people. If one calls for non-violence in such circumstances one appears to be criticizing the resistance of the people while justifying or at least overlooking the violence of the police and the State.<sup>156</sup>

This question as to whether it was right to resist violence with violence was one of the most divisive for Christians who opposed apartheid and who looked for non-racial solutions. C.F.C. Coetzee, writing in 2004, says this:

Churches and church leaders who supported revolutionary violence against the apartheid system on Biblical "grounds", should confess their unbiblical hermeneutical approach and reject the option of violence.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> From chapter 3 of the *Kairos Document*.

<sup>156</sup> From chapter 3 of the *Kairos Document*.

<sup>157</sup> Coetzee C.F.C. "Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Role of Church and Theology" in *In die Skriflig* 38(2) 2004:333-348, p1.

### 3.4.5 Oppression

Chapter Four of the Kairos Document is entitled "Towards a Prophetic Theology." We now look at three of the areas into which authors believed Christians should speak prophetically.

There is no question that oppression is a theme found throughout the Bible. This is seen most vividly in the oppression of the Israelite people in Egypt and the Kairos document uses this as a pillar for its argument. Another pillar is the passage from Isaiah as Jesus quotes it in the synagogue as recorded in Luke 4:18-19. Here Jesus proclaims himself to be the one sent to free the downtrodden.

The document points out that God acts as a liberator and not as a reconciler. Oppression is a sin and there should be no compromise with sin. God sides with the oppressed and not with the oppressor 'as we read in Psalm 103:6 (JB) "God who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed."<sup>158</sup>

### 3.4.6 Tyranny

The Kairos Document speaks of tyranny.

According to this tradition once it is established beyond doubt that a particular ruler is a tyrant or that a particular regime is tyrannical, it forfeits the moral right to govern and the people acquire the right to resist and to find the means to protect their own interests against injustice and oppression. In other words a tyrannical regime has no *moral legitimacy*. It may be the *de facto* government and it may even be recognized by other governments and therefore be the *de jure* or legal government. But if it is a tyrannical regime, it is, from a moral and theological point of view, *illegitimate*. There are indeed some differences of opinion in the Christian tradition about the means that might be used to replace a tyrant but there has not been any doubt about our Christian duty to refuse to co-operate with tyranny and to do whatever we can to remove it.<sup>159</sup>

The Kairos Document argues that the apartheid government was the enemy of the common good – that it did not govern in the best interests of citizens in general. Further, this was a result of systematic (rather than occasional) injustice and thus it was undeniably tyrannical.

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<sup>158</sup> Chapter 4 of the *Kairos Document*.

<sup>159</sup> From chapter 4 of the *Kairos Document*.

A tyrannical government will be resisted and thus inevitably begins to enforce its rule using violence and methods which violate the common good. It is also self-reinforcing, as should an individual member of the ruling tyranny repent, he or she would be obliged to leave the ruling party to which he or she can no longer be allegiant. “A regime that has made itself the enemy of the people has thereby also made itself the enemy of God. People are made in the image and likeness of God and whatever we do to the least of them we do to God (Mt 25:49, 45).”<sup>160</sup>

Tyranny is not only something enforced by violence and brutality – it can be very subtle. In South Africa, the reign of an inherently unjust system created a confusion of morals and for many people it was difficult to determine right from wrong. Buti Tlhagale describes the reaction of the black majority in this way:

The deep scars caused by decades of exploitation and sheer terror have blunted the sharp edges of the black community’s moral sensitivity hence the belief that violence is the only alternative means to achieve freedom.<sup>161</sup>

Tutu refers to the government’s enforcement of an unjust system when saying, “Here in South Africa we tend to think that legal and morally right mean the same thing.”<sup>162</sup>

Tutu also notes that the apartheid regime was well-versed at using language for its own purposes and that it was used not to describe, but to create reality in the minds of hearers. He gives this example:

I just wish to caution us in listening to Ministerial assurances that they come from a group who are adepts at using language – note example legislation called The Extension of Universities Act which normal people would understand to mean increasing facilities for Blacks to obtain university education. You need a special dictionary to understand our English here – that Act in fact stopped Blacks going to so-called White universities except with that abomination in our lives, a permit.<sup>163</sup>

### 3.4.7 Hope and the Kingdom of God

The Kairos Document also stresses a belief that the message of the gospel is one of hope for positive change. The gospel says that the Kingdom of God will come

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<sup>160</sup> From chapter 4 of the *Kairos Document*.

<sup>161</sup> Tlhagale, Buti “Desmond Tutu” p xiii.

<sup>162</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p53.

<sup>163</sup> Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p46.

and that the will of God will one day be achieved – tyranny and oppression cannot last forever. As Revelation 7:17 and 21:4 say all tears will be wiped away and from Isaiah 11:6 ‘the lamb will lie down with the lion’. Therefore, these Christians believe in a God-given hope for a new and better future.<sup>164</sup>

### 3.4.8 Just me, my voice, the author

#### ***Birth, Education and Family***

I was born in March 1965 in a clinic in Johannesburg. My parents were David and Merle Wells and I have a younger brother. The family is English-speaking. I attended the local government schools in Randburg where we lived and I obtained a matric certificate. I attempted a BSc degree at Wits University but did not complete it. I obtained a three-year Diploma in Datametrics from Unisa and when I was quite a bit older I qualified with a four year BTh and a Master’s degree in Theology through correspondence studies at the Baptist Theological College in Randburg.

I married in 1988 and we have four children. In 2014 I was ordained as minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

#### ***Belief and Contribution***

It is a little difficult to separate my beliefs now, from what they were in the 1980s. I find the Kairos Document a little scary in its forthrightness, but I suspect my younger self (who never read it) would have approved.

My parents – particularly my father – did not support apartheid. My father was involved in local white politics and stood as a candidate in a municipal election, sometime in the 70s, which he lost. I used to draw political cartoons as a child, but my awareness was far more of white politics and the greater picture was not clear to me. My parents hosted a meeting of Soweto teachers in June 1976, on behalf of the Progressive Party, in an attempt to moderate the events that were anticipated for the 16<sup>th</sup>. I was aware of the house being flooded by strange people, but did not know the meaning of it at the time.

When I was twelve years old I refused to attend the obligatory Veldschool as I had heard that they were used to ‘brainwash’ youngsters and I did not want to

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<sup>164</sup> From chapter 4 of the *Kairos Document*.

support the 'regime', but I was still by and large politically unaware. When I was fourteen I did attend a leadership camp, which turned out to be in the Veldschool model and I was most ashamed of myself for being taken in, for a couple of hours, by the lure of the talks promoting white supremacism.

As a teenager, I attended youth rallies designed to foster racial harmony and believed in the concept passionately. When I finished school, I attended black services in our local Methodist Church for perhaps two years. In 1985 I became a fully qualified Local Preacher and I organised a joint service where the white and black congregations met together – it seemed like a logical thing to do, but I didn't realise that I was being quite radical for the time. I was for a short time on the steering committee of the Methodist *Ubulungisa* racial togetherness programme,<sup>165</sup> but found my role frustrating as I tried to fit into a group who had known each other for years. There was also frustration as the Alexandra township was the only black group area within easy reach of the north and east of Johannesburg – thus they were overwhelmed with white groups wanting to be involved in reconciliation activities.

My husband had completed his obligatory two years of military service before we were married. He had spent the time working in a shop in an army base and we hoped that he would be one of the lucky ones not to be called up for the 'mandatory' annual camps thereafter. This was not to be and he received papers requiring him to report for duty in one of the townships where the defence force was 'keeping the peace.' We did not feel that he could do that and he became a category three religious objector and was required to work for the government for three years in lieu of camps. After he completed that period the country was well on the road to change and, amongst other things, conscription rules were changed.

More of what I believe and who I am will become clear as my voice is heard in the thesis.

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<sup>165</sup> This was a programme that encouraged groups from different races to share meals in each other's homes.

### 3.5 A Word about Hermeneutics

While the scope of this thesis does not include doing a definitive comparison of the hermeneutical methods of the various texts of the 1970s and 1980s in South Africa, it is informative to note that there were fundamental differences. Gerald O. West records the interpretive tools used as follows:

While white English-speaking biblical scholarship has been predominantly historical-critical, white Afrikaner-speaking biblical scholarship has tended to take up the structuralist and semiotic strands of the literary approaches (Draper 1991, Smit 1990). On the other hand, Black biblical scholarship, though showing some signs of literary analysis, concentrates on the socio-historical resources of biblical scholarship.<sup>166</sup>

West goes on to say that while western scholars tend to focus on questions arising from the academy, African scholars tend to focus on questions arising from their own African experience.<sup>167</sup> While they share 'interpretive' interests with other scholars, African scholarship is different in its unashamed bringing of 'life interests' to the text.<sup>168</sup> Underlying this is simply the value that different people attach to intellectual enterprise and to the validity of human experience. As Robert P. Carroll says, "What determines the way we read the Bible are extra-Biblical values and ideologies."<sup>169</sup>

Black Theologians and African Theologians, however, did not by any means have one single way of interpreting the Bible.

In his provocative work, Mosala (1987) criticizes the biblical hermeneutics of such other Black theologians as James Cone, Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak. What he inadvertently achieves also, is to demonstrate the immense diversity of biblical "readings" within Black theology. However, virtually all types of Black Theology hermeneutics "catalogued" by Mosala operate, in varying degrees, from the standpoint of a critical view of the Bible and its contents. Some of them, like Mosala himself, go further and point out the ideological nature of the biblical text itself, both in its "final form" as well as in

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<sup>166</sup> West, Gerald O. "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation: A Tentative Sketch" in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* Leiden: Brill, 2001 p38. He refers to Draper, Jonathan A. "For the Kingdom Is Inside You and It Is Outside of You": Contextual Exegesis in South Africa." In *Text and Interpretation: New Approaches in the Criticism of the New Testament*. (Ed. P.J. Hartin and J.H. Petzer) Leiden: Brill, 1991. Also, Smit, Dirk J. "The Ethics of Interpretation: and South Africa" In *Scriptura* 33, 29-43, 1990.

<sup>167</sup> West, Gerald O. "Mapping African Biblical Interpretation" p38.

<sup>168</sup> West, Gerald O. "Interrogating the Comparative Paradigm in African Biblical Scholarship" in *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue* (ed. Hans de Witt & Gerald O. West) Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008 p40.

<sup>169</sup> Carroll, Robert P. "Rhetorics of a Visit" p193.

its production. Therefore the level of debate within Black Theology is on the particular ideologies of particular texts and whether readers should “collude” or “rebel” against such texts.<sup>170</sup>

Tinyiko Maluleke also points out that the Bible did not exist as a primary text for most African Christians, as was the case for western theologians.

Similarly the manner in which Black Christians relate to the Bible has been to view the Bible as part of a larger package of resources and legacies which include stories, preaching and language mannerisms, songs, choruses, ecclesiologies, theodicies, catechism manuals and a range of rituals and rites. Therefore, while it may be pedagogically necessary to speak of Africans and the Bible and even African Theology and the Bible, in reality there is no such exclusive and specific relation with the Bible. The Bible has been appropriated and continues to be appropriated as part of a larger package of resources.<sup>171</sup>

It was possibly this knowledge that African theology was influenced by multiple texts that allowed Desmond Tutu to look more broadly and understand and engage with the texts of apartheid theology.

It is interesting to note that just as many African scholars are proud of their homegrown hermeneutical methods, so too were the early proponents of apartheid Theology. Their adapting of Calvinistic theology “neither bore the mark of importation, nor wished to imitate the Calvinism of other countries or to voice any overseas form of Calvinism, but adapted to the national temperament, history and circumstances.”<sup>172</sup>

As with some African scholars today, they were convinced that the best reading of the Bible was the naïve one – that which was interpreted according to the situation in which they found themselves and with no need to adopt any critical method.<sup>173</sup>

There was no way in which critique would be allowed to question the application of a naively interpreted Bible to the common sense interpretation of Afrikaners’ socio-political situation.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Maluleke, Tinyiko S. “The Bible Among African Christians: A Missiological Perspective” in *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth* (ed. Teresa Okure) Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000 p103.

<sup>171</sup> Maluleke, Tinyiko “The Bible Among African Christians” p95.

<sup>172</sup> Deist, Ferdinand E. “The Dangers of Deuteronomy” p18.

<sup>173</sup> Deist, Ferdinand E. “The Dangers of Deuteronomy” p18.

<sup>174</sup> Deist, Ferdinand E. “The Dangers of Deuteronomy” p20.



These different perspectives help us to see there were, and are, different ideo-theological positions held in South Africa – and remind us how prejudiced we may be if we are not able to suspend our disbelief.

### **3.6 In Summary**

In this way, we complete our description of the South African voices. There is that of the Afrikaner who supported apartheid. A voice which is passionate, but often devious; a voice which speaks in the language of God and religion and yet seems to be totally self-centred. There is the African voice. We have looked at the particular stream called Black Consciousness and we have seen the determination to take control and to achieve liberation. We shall add to that voice as we occasionally look back to traditional African beliefs to round out our picture. We also have the voice which speaks in response to both apartheid and Black Consciousness with a need to hear the message of liberation from oppression, but also the need to hear the call of God and the reality of a Christianity which speaks into today's world. We have heard the Afrikaner voice in dying tones, while the other voices have vibrated with hope and the sense of a future.

We shall now journey into the original context of Paul's letter to the Romans and describe rather different voices. This will be our second input space to our conceptual blends.

## CHAPTER FOUR – THE CONTEXT INTO WHICH ROMANS WAS WRITTEN

### 4.1 Thesis Capture<sup>175</sup>

*“Hi, excuse me! Could you just move out of the way? We need to move this table.”*

*“Where should I put this? Does James need it?”*

*“I’m going to need power over here – does anyone have another extension?”*

*I do apologise. There seems to be some confusion in this thesis. I don’t know what these people are doing here. Please excuse me as I attempt to find out. I see someone with a clipboard. She is probably in charge.*

*“Good day, and welcome to my thesis. May I ask what you are doing here?”*

*The woman consulted her clipboard. “Conceptual Blending team for Hillebrand thesis, UKZN. Prepare venue and scene. Have I got the right thesis?”*

*“Well, yes you have. I have been looking forward to meeting the Conceptual Blending team, but you are not on until the end of Chapter 5!”*

*“That is correct, but you don’t think that we can just appear do you? There is so much to be done. I am afraid that we will need to take over Chapter 4 as well. Unless you would rather do without us?”*

*“Goodness, no. You are essential to the thesis. Carry on then. I will continue working on your second input space.”*

*I am afraid that the team is here somewhat precipitously. I hope that you will bear with us and accept that explanations of their work will follow – in Chapter 5! Here, in the meantime, are their working notes.*

### 4.2 Background

We need to examine the context or background for the original reading of the text.

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<sup>175</sup> This is a play on the concept of ‘state capture’ which was the name given to the alleged ‘buying’ of the president of South Africa by an influential family. See for example Nicolson, Greg *State Capture: Madonsela needs funds to investigate as Jonas speaks out again*. Available <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-06-08-state-capture-madonsela-needs-funds-to-investigate-as-jonas-speaks-out-again/> 2016.

Paul has been acknowledged as the actual author of the text almost universally. The date of writing is also well agreed upon and is taken to be around 55-57CE.<sup>176</sup> What we would really like to know is how the audience of Paul's letter was composed. This audience will reveal to us the voices that we would like to hear. There is some thought that the letter to the Romans may have been sent to other communities, without the specific greetings, prior to the compilation of the existing text. While this may be true, the personal greetings in chapter 16 show that it was also sent to the Christian community in Rome, thus Paul did anticipate it being heard by that particular audience.<sup>177</sup>

*"Ahem, excuse me, don't you mean Ephesus? Some of those people he greeted lived in Ephesus."*<sup>178</sup>

*"Yes, but they may well have moved on to Rome. There is nothing to say that they didn't. In fact, Phoebe, one of those Paul greeted, probably carried the letter."*<sup>179</sup>  
*According to Robert Jewett consensus has crystallised in the Pauline studies community that Romans should be viewed as a 'situational letter' written to a specific people for a specific purpose.*<sup>180</sup> *Now please carry on with your work and do not disturb the thesis any more than is necessary."*

That Romans is written into a particular context is important to Jewett who has taken as his theme for his commentary that Paul was trying to persuade the Romans to support his proposed mission to Spain.<sup>181</sup> Other scholars, however, see other priorities such as the urging of diverse peoples in the church to peaceful co-existence.<sup>182</sup> Daniel Boyarin, in particular, holds that it makes sense to see as the moral centre of all Paul's work "the erasure of human difference, primarily the difference between Jew and gentile but also that between man and woman, freeman and slave."<sup>183</sup> These themes are compatible with the question that the case study of

<sup>176</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006 p18.

<sup>177</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p8-9.

<sup>178</sup> Roetzel, Calvin J. *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context Sixth Edition* Westminster: John Knox Press, 2015 p134.

<sup>179</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p22-23.

<sup>180</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p3.

<sup>181</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p3.

<sup>182</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p84-85.

<sup>183</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994 p46-47.

this thesis is asking and thus we embrace them. Jewett's idea that Paul was planning a mission does not preclude the peaceful co-existence theme. In fact, learning to get on with one another would have been an important precursor to introducing yet another culture to the mix.

One of the peoples that Paul would have been addressing was the Jews. How and when the Jews arrived in Rome is an ongoing debate. What is known is that by the time of Augustus, according to Philo, a large Jewish population had settled mainly on the right bank of the Tiber, a poor residential area of the city, known as Trastevere.<sup>184</sup>

There would, naturally, also have been indigenous Romans living in Rome. That one of the major themes of Romans is the integration of the Jewish and Gentile Christians makes it likely that some of these Romans were also part of the church. Jewett points out that recently scholars have become convinced that by the time of the writing of this letter, Gentiles were in the majority in the church at Rome. In fact, much of the letter is devoted to rescuing the Jewish component from Gentile disparagement.<sup>185</sup>

Another major section of the population would have been the Hellenistic or Greek section. Although in many ways, this seems to have been integrated into the Roman section and the cultures merged, there was some distinction.

When Paul wrote to the Christ-followers of Rome, ... he used Greek, not Latin. This insufficiently appreciated fact reminds us that Paul was directing his letter to Greek-speaking immigrants in the city, or to their descendants who still spoke this language. . . [T]he transition from Greek to Latin would have marked a sign of increased wealth and status.<sup>186</sup>

Paul was in the useful position of being comfortable in each of these settings which formed part of his world. N.T. Wright portrays it as follows:

As should be apparent, this world could be described in terms of its multiple overlapping and sometimes competing *narratives*: the story of God and Israel from the Jewish side; the pagan stories about their gods and the world, and the implicit narratives around which individual pagans constructed their

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<sup>184</sup> See for example Nguyen, Van Thanh and Prior, John M. *God's People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspectives on Migration and Mission* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014 p64.

<sup>185</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p70.

<sup>186</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p84.

identities, from the Greco-Roman sides; particularly the great narratives of empire, both the large scale ones we find in Virgil and Livy and elsewhere and the smaller, implicit ones of local culture<sup>187</sup>

All of these narratives would have been represented in the church. The following pages describe each of these cultures in a way that will hopefully help us to hear their voices better when we study the text of the letter that was sent to them.

*“Let’s have the Jewish actors, then!” Hands clapped and people bustled.*

*“No, Tom, not Jewish! Hebrew.”*

*“No, better to make it Israelite, or Israeli.”*

*“Hmm. Apparently Jew ’louḏaĩō (and variations) appears fourteen times in the Roman RSV text, Israel and variations fourteen times and Hebrew not at all. We could argue precise meanings and historical and geographic connotations,<sup>188</sup> but I shall follow Paul and the RSV translators and use Jew, with Israelite and Judean as variations. I hope you are happy with that,” said the young man who had been addressed as Tom.*

*“Let’s have the Israelites! I trust you have all read the introductory brochure. If not please skim it now. You need to start to think like an Israelite!”*

### 4.3 Exploring the Context of the Israelite

It would be very helpful to our understanding of the context if we could describe a day in the life of the average Judean in Rome in 57CE. There is however little first-hand information. We rely heavily on the writings of Philo and Josephus, while archaeological evidence is limited to that found in the catacombs. Roman literature contained frequent references to the Jews, but they “give us a picture distorted by misinformation and prejudice.”<sup>189</sup> Some populists, such as Ray van der Laan<sup>190</sup> have produced very interesting suggestions, but his work is mostly

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<sup>187</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005 p7.

<sup>188</sup> For example Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p68-69.

<sup>189</sup> Leon, Harry J. *The Jews of Ancient Rome: Updated Edition* Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995 p38.

<sup>190</sup> see his website <https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com>.

speculative and based on later Judaism.<sup>191</sup> The success of such authors and speakers indicates how much people want to know 'what it was really like, in those days'. To hear the Jewish voice, we do need to try to get under the skin of the first-century Jew, but recognise that much of what we know – or to be honest, speculate – is from surrounding areas both historically and geographically.

E.P. Sanders has produced an evaluation of Judaism at the time of the early church which caused something of a revolution in the world of New Testament scholarship. His study is one which has carefully evaluated what can be known about the religion of the Jews from the material available. Previously, as he notes, much of what was written was driven by the agenda of the authors - whether it was the eighteenth century's attempt to show that Christianity was a logical progression of Judaism and thus that the two were in agreement or the later picture of Weber, Schürer and Bousset which showed Judaism as the antithesis of Christianity.<sup>192</sup> While we would like to have studies which are not driven by preconceived ideas, the range of interpretations is understandable as we acknowledge that there is very little concrete evidence which can help us describe first century Judaism.

It is as if we are trying to recover the picture when all we have is a handful of pieces from a jigsaw puzzle. In the gospels we read descriptions of Jesus' ongoing conversation with the Jewish leaders and we try to figure out where these Jewish leaders were coming from and what they believed. From the epistles, we read oblique and direct references to Jewish practices, but seldom a description of what these practices were. It has been common, therefore, to work out a theology of Jesus or a theology of Paul and from that to work back towards understanding the theology of the Jews. Clearly, this has always been biased towards the scholars' initial conception of the picture in the jigsaw.

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<sup>191</sup> For example Witherington, Ben III *Rob Bell Hits Lexington and Packed Out* [online as at 7 Sept 2013] available <http://benwitherington.blogspot.com/2007/02/rob-bell-hits-lexington-and-packed-out.html> 2007.

<sup>192</sup> Sanders, E.P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* London: SCM Press, 1977 p33; (Weber, Ferdinand, *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften* 2nd ed. (ed. Franz Delitzsch and Georg Schnedermann) Leipzig: Dörffling Franke, 1897; Schürer, Emil, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, New York: Scribner's, 1885-1891; Bousset, Wilhelm *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: Philologische-Historische Klasse*. Berlin: Reuther 1916.)

Sanders began a new trend of serious discovery of the actual nature of first century Judaism. Jewish scholar Daniel Boyarin has this to say about Sanders' work:

Sanders has forever changed the way that Paul will be read by scholars and interpreters of his work. In his masterwork, he finally achieved what several Christian and Jewish scholars... had tried for decades to achieve – to demonstrate that the slander of early Judaism promulgated by interpreters of Paul was simply and finally just that, a slander. ... Let me repeat this point: Whatever any interpreter ends up saying about Paul and Judaism from now on starts from actual Jewish texts and not from Paul. ... As a professional and confessional student of rabbinical Judaism, I find Sanders' descriptions of my religious tradition unfailingly apposite to my own intuitions about this tradition.<sup>193</sup>

This project to understand the Jewish situation on its own merits, as it were, has spawned further work including the New Perspective<sup>194</sup> on Paul and more recently the 'new' New Perspective.<sup>195</sup>

Chilton and Neusner, however, take exception to Sanders' treatment,<sup>196</sup> saying that we cannot find one particular set of beliefs and practices that define Judaism. This complicates our attempt at understanding the audience of Paul's letter. "For if we examine the communities of the faithful of Jerusalem, whether now or in antiquity, we are struck by the diversity of those communities and their faiths."<sup>197</sup> We are familiar with the different groups - the Pharisees and Sadducees who cooperated with each other and the Qumran community who held themselves apart. However, even within the non-separated people there were differences. Chilton and Neusner suggest as examples reformed, orthodox, segregationist, and integrationist.<sup>198</sup>

Understanding that we cannot completely define or describe early Judaism, in the diaspora or otherwise, we shall note down some features of which we do have knowledge in the following paragraphs.

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<sup>193</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew* p46-47.

<sup>194</sup> See for example Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective*.

<sup>195</sup> See for example Nanos, Mark D. and Zetterholm, Magnus (eds.) *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the first century context to the apostle* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Chilton, Bruce and Neusner, Jacob *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* London: Routledge, 1995 p49.

<sup>197</sup> Chilton and Neusner *Judaism in the New Testament* p20.

<sup>198</sup> Chilton and Neusner *Judaism in the New Testament* p20.

#### 4.3.1 Jews in Rome

There are some clues in the ancient literature about the origins of the Judean people living in Rome. In 59 BCE Cicero gave an address at the trial of Lucius Valerius Flaccus who was accused of misappropriating funds collected by the Jews in Rome for the temple in Jerusalem. Cicero comments on the number of Jews present at the trial<sup>199</sup> and this incident tells us that by this time “the Jews of the city were already a formidable element in Roman politics.”<sup>200</sup> We know that the number of Jews had received a boost two years earlier when Gnaeus Pompey brought back many captives – some of them Jews from Jerusalem.<sup>201</sup> There are two other pieces of information which help us with the size of the Jewish population. In 4 BCE about 8 000 Roman Jews supported a delegation from Judea and in 19 CE, during the reign of Tiberius, about 4 000 Jews from Rome were armed and sent to war in Sardinia.<sup>202</sup> These suggest that the Jewish community numbered between 20 000 and 50 000<sup>203</sup> people at the time of writing of this letter.

During the reign of Claudius, an edict was issued with the apparent intention of expelling all Jews from the city of Rome, but it is not certain what the extent of his decree was. He may have intended the removal of all Jews, or of Jewish Christians, or it may have been a limitation on their meeting together as groups.<sup>204</sup> In particular, in Acts 18:2 we read of Aquila and Priscilla who had apparently left Italy due to this decree. Given the size of the Jewish community out of a total Roman population of 800 000 to 900 000<sup>205</sup> this would have been a significant event in whatever way it was implemented. After Claudius’ death (or perhaps even before) Jews began returning to Rome<sup>206</sup> or began meeting together again and by the time Paul wrote

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<sup>199</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries* London: t&t clark, 2010 p3.

<sup>200</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p5.

<sup>201</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p4, also Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome*, p2 and elsewhere.

<sup>202</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome*, p3, also Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p14, Nguyen and Prior, *God’s People on the Move* p65-66.

<sup>203</sup> Nguyen, Van Thanh and Prior, John M. *God’s People on the Move* p64, also Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p101.

<sup>204</sup> See discussion in Jewett, Robert *Romans* p18-19; Esler, Philip F. *Conflict and Identity* p98-100.

<sup>205</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p84.

<sup>206</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p59.



this letter there was a flourishing Christian community consisting of probably both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>207</sup>

Some scholars suggest that Jews arrived in Rome as merchants<sup>208</sup> but it seems more likely that Jews only became active in that economic sphere in the fifth century.<sup>209</sup>

The Jewish population, at this time, was predominantly poor.<sup>210</sup> However, the community had clearly prospered and grown in spite of its location in a poor residential area.<sup>211</sup> Leon writes, “attractively decorated private tomb chambers” show that “in contrast, there are signs that the various congregations had also their prosperous members and many with a good education.”<sup>212</sup>

It is difficult to know what proportion of the Jewish population were slaves. Certainly many of them had arrived in Rome as captives and had thus become slaves, but many of these would have been freed. Leonard Rutgers describes three categories to which Jews could belong, describing varying amounts of freedom. Some of them could have been slaves, with few, if any, rights, but subject to criminal law. Some may have been free people – living in Rome either as foreigners or as informally freed slaves. They were better protected than slaves were, but could be evicted from the city. Lastly, some may have been Roman citizens and it is known that many were. They had the protection of the courts if accused of a crime and ultimately could appeal to the emperor.<sup>213</sup>

In particular, Bernard Green believes Jewish slaves would have been ransomed by their fellows or freed by their owners who found their insistence on keeping the Jewish dietary laws and Sabbaths restrictive. They “acquired Roman citizenship and became part of the city rabble.”<sup>214</sup>

Finally, Leon, on the evidence of the catacomb inscriptions agrees:

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<sup>207</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p70.

<sup>208</sup> Nguyen and Prior *God's People on the Move* p64.

<sup>209</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p236.

<sup>210</sup> For example Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p234-237.

<sup>211</sup> Nguyen and Prior *God's People on the Move* p64.

<sup>212</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p235.

<sup>213</sup> Rutgers, Leonard Victor “Roman Policy Toward the Jews” in *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 p97-98, also Nguyen and Prior *God's People on the Move* p65.

<sup>214</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p4.

There is not a single mention in our catacomb inscriptions of either slaves or freedmen...It may well be that by the time of our inscriptions there were no Jewish slaves within the Jewish community and that if any Jew died while in slavery to a non-Jew and was buried in a Jewish cemetery, the fact of his servitude was not mentioned on his epitaph.<sup>215</sup>

Leon also mentions two specific cases where a Jewish slave was mentioned in the literature.<sup>216</sup> We, thus, cannot be sure what proportion of the Jews were actually slaves at the time of Paul's writing, although we can know that many had been enslaved or had forebears who had been enslaved.

#### 4.3.2 How the Romans saw the Jews

"The attitude is generally one of amused contempt at the exotic and seemingly absurd Jewish customs."<sup>217</sup> The philosopher, Seneca, mocked the keeping of the Sabbath seeing it as idle and irrelevant.<sup>218</sup> The writer Juvenal who seems to have had little pleasant to say, expresses his dislike that the Jews had been given use of land which "transformed that idyllic spot into a haunt of beggars."<sup>219</sup> Tacitus seemed to have an interest in the Jews, yet his descriptions were often off the mark as when he believed that the Jews had a shrine holding the statue of an ass.<sup>220</sup> Here he expresses a general opinion of the Jewish customs. . .

*"Oh, I like this speech. 'Base and abominable!' Let me be Tacitus." One of the actors leapt into action as the others stopped to stare at him.*

*"Listen everyone!" He said, as he began to proclaim in deep tones:*

*The other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity; for the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews . . . . Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice [of cutting themselves off from other peoples], and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account.<sup>221</sup>*

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<sup>215</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p237.

<sup>216</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p237-238.

<sup>217</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p38.

<sup>218</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p38.

<sup>219</sup> Leon, Harry J. *Jews of Ancient Rome* p234.

<sup>220</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p3.

<sup>221</sup> Feldman, Louis H. and Meyer, Reinhold (eds.) *Jewish Life and Thought among Greek and Romans: Primary Readings* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996 p131.

*“Yes,” interjected another of the actors, “but on the other hand the Jews enjoyed special protection and privilege from the Roman emperors! They were allowed to collect money for the temple in Jerusalem from the Jewish settlements all over the empire – that’s what Cicero says. Also Julius Caesar, Augustus and Claudius all gave Jews the right to live according to their customs and beliefs. They could meet for worship and meals and even have kosher markets.”*<sup>222</sup>

There was also a significant number of upper class Romans who were intrigued by the Jewish practices and belief.<sup>223</sup> For some reason the Sabbath was of special interest and the practice of celebrating this day was quite widespread. Green – while admitting that Josephus was probably exaggerating – says:

According to Josephus, there was not a town in the Roman Empire where people had not imitated Jewish Sabbath observance along with other religious practices such as lighting lamps and fasting or charitable giving, hard work and endurance.<sup>224</sup>

*“Ha, I like that! We Judeans might be a poor bunch of former slaves. But we had clout. Mock us, Romans, at your peril.”*

*“You wish! You are only part of a puny conquered tribe. Just because we allow you some privileges doesn’t mean you can get uppity.”*

*“It’s nice to see you all getting into character. Please remember that there would have been great variety amongst the people – we don’t want to give the impression that these groups were homogeneous cardboard cut-outs.”*

#### 4.3.3 Heritage

The Jew’s sense of their unique history and their particular law set them apart even though their culture was influenced by the Graeco-Roman setting in which they lived. We quote Green drawing this idea from the sympathetic Philo and then from the more hostile Tacitus.

*“You tell us about Philo! I want to be Tacitus again,” exclaimed the heroic actor. His friend intoned:*

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<sup>222</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p 56 (drawn from, not a quote).

<sup>223</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p14-15.

<sup>224</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p13.

*“According to Philo, the collection of the Temple tax, the teaching in the synagogues, the strict observance of the Law, especially of the Sabbath, and the long memory of their origins marked out the Jewish community in Trastevere, across the Tiber from the main part of the city, as a proud and closely-knit group.”<sup>225</sup>*

*“Oh, it’s not a proper speech, after all! Nor is this one, but let me tell you about Tacitus and the Jews:*

*Try as he might, even when he is at his most scornful, Tacitus cannot quite suppress a note of respect for a brave and defiant people, fearless in battle, utterly loyal and generous to each other, with their austere conception of the absolute, eternal and invisible God. They differed from others because of their large families and their opposition to abortion and infanticide, but Tacitus’s hostility mainly derives from the way the Jews were so self-contained, unassimilated into society, separated off by marriage and dietary customs and religious belief. Anyone joining them, and there are clearly enough of them to be worthy of comment, have to cut themselves off from the society of which they were formerly a part.”<sup>226</sup>*

The Jewish community was, however, not secretive about its beliefs and practices – rather they in turn influenced the culture around them. Augustine quotes Seneca:

When speaking of the Jews he [Seneca] says: ‘Meanwhile the customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors.’ He shows his surprise as he says this, not knowing what was being wrought by the providence of God.<sup>227</sup>

The history of the Jews is found, largely, in the Old Testament.

*“Oh no, I can see what is coming. A tedious retelling of the supposed history of the Israelites. Why does it matter?”*

*“It matters because the Jews attachment to their heritage helped define them. They were not totally assimilated into the Greek or Roman cultures because of their history and their customs.”*

*“Well, can you be very, very brief then?”*

*“If you were a little more patient you would have already seen that it will be summarised. I’m going to use references to that history found in the speeches and*

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<sup>225</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p10.

<sup>226</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p14.

<sup>227</sup> Feldman and Meyer *Jewish Life and Thought* p131.

*sermons of Peter,<sup>228</sup> Stephen,<sup>229</sup> and Paul<sup>230</sup> as recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. There are reasonable indications that Luke intended his two volume writing of Luke-Acts to be read as history, although he was undoubtedly doing more than just creating a recording of events.<sup>231</sup> Will that be acceptable to you?”*

*“I suppose that means that you will leave things out. And we will have to put up with contentious stuff?”*

*“You asked me to be brief! If a scene in a story is set in a vegetable garden, it is not necessary to describe every vegetable growing in the garden. When we need more detail later on, we will fill it in then.”*

The Jews believed that their God was the creator of the universe. He was creator of the parts that were known and the parts that were unknown.<sup>232</sup> This made him almighty and superior to any other God. They believed from the creation stories found in Genesis that he made all things and that they were good and that he was pleased with his creation.

They believed that God chose a particular human being, Abraham, to be the father of all the Jewish people. God chose and called him and he followed faithfully to the land that God had promised the Jews. As children of Abraham, the Jews formed a family with each member having a special attachment to other members of the family. This attachment was marked by the circumcision of male children and was seen as a covenantal relationship between themselves and God.

We make special mention of circumcision noting that Green believes it to be one of two features of Judaism which stood out for Roman writers (the other being the Sabbath). “Petronius, writing in the time of Nero thought circumcision was entirely distinctive of the Jews. Martial repeatedly remarked upon it.”<sup>233</sup> Mark Nanos disagrees that it was distinctive, but agrees that it was significant:

Notwithstanding the fact that there were other peoples who practiced circumcision according to different customs, Paul employs the term

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<sup>228</sup> Acts 2:14-36, 3:13, 4:24, 5:30.

<sup>229</sup> Acts 7:1-56.

<sup>230</sup> Acts 13:16-41, 24:14-15, 28:25-28.

<sup>231</sup> See for example the arguments in Witherington, Ben *The Acts of the Apostles* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998 p1-24.

<sup>232</sup> Acts 4:24.

<sup>233</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p12-13.

*circumcision*, like other Jews in general, to signify the identity of males marked as Jews or Israelites according to the guidelines of Torah, who are thereby distinguished from all other peoples.<sup>234</sup>

Nanos points out that the form of this rite was so distinctive that Paul uses it as a metonym for “Jew”. He also reminds us that it was usually performed on eight-day old baby boys, although it was also performed on those who became Jews at a later age. Women were included in the circumcision by association.<sup>235</sup>

Abraham’s son Isaac and Isaac’s son Jacob were known as the patriarchs or fathers of the nation. They would often refer to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or as the God of their forefathers.<sup>236</sup>

After Jacob, the people of Israel settled in Egypt. They prospered there, but became slaves to the Egyptian pharaoh. God saw their suffering and sent a rescuer to lead them to freedom and eventually back to the land that God had promised Abraham for his descendants. The rescuer, Moses, also received the Law from God and gave it to the people to obey. In Exodus, they were told that this Law constituted the covenant between God and his people. The Israelites rejected Moses many times, but he persevered with them. He also foretold that God would raise up someone like him to rescue the people sometime in the future.<sup>237</sup>

The period that followed saw worship in the tabernacle which was made by the people under Moses, the rule of judges and Samuel and then the formation of a kingdom. They believed that God appointed first Saul and then David and Solomon to rule over them. David was considered a patriarch and was known as a man after God’s own heart. He also foretold the coming of a king who would be like him. Solomon built the first temple.<sup>238</sup>

As has been seen, part of their heritage was the voices of the prophets who held hope for the future. Joel spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit and a new

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<sup>234</sup> Nanos, Mark “The Question of Conceptualization: Qualifying Paul’s Position on Circumcision in Dialogue with Josephus’s Advisors to King Izates” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First Century Context to the Apostle* (ed Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015 p107.

<sup>235</sup> Nanos “The Question of Conceptualization” p106-107.

<sup>236</sup> Acts 3:13, 7:2-8, 13:17, 26, 32, 24:14.

<sup>237</sup> Acts 7:20-44, 13:17-19.

<sup>238</sup> Acts 2:25-35, 7:44-50, 13:20-22.

power,<sup>239</sup> Isaiah warned that people would be reluctant to hear the word of truth in the future.<sup>240</sup> As Stephen was dying he echoed the prophet Daniel when he says that he saw the Son of Man by the side of God.<sup>241</sup>

We also mention the significance of the exile period and particularly the return, where the prophets are concerned with the manner in which the Jews have intermarried with the surrounding peoples. Ezra calls for these marriages to be set aside, contributing to the set-apartness of the Jews which we see in Rome.

Ezra's zealous call for endogamy serves to circumscribe and protect Israel as a people through generations, a holy seed, pure and set apart from others. Ezra's defense of endogamy is an ethno-racial discourse that casts mixed marriage as an unholy mixing, a profaning of God's people.<sup>242</sup>

*"Yes, I can see that this would make the Judeans possessive of their place in history. But I'm guessing that the religious rituals were really what separated them from others."*

#### 4.3.4 Religion and Ritual - Torah

*"Look at all these different pages for the Jewish actors. Some are headed Sadducees; Teachers of the Law; Zealots. Here are Pharisees – these sheets are a bit more detailed. Hellenic; Proselytes from around the world. What's this about the Dead Sea scrolls?"*

The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has also given evidence of a community which was centred at Qumran. This community has been identified with the Essenes mentioned by Josephus, although this link is uncertain.<sup>243</sup> It is unclear how established the social class of the 'People of the Land' or the Am-ha'aretz was at the time, but there certainly would have been disparities between rich and poor. We need to be reminded that this group was not homogenous.

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<sup>239</sup> Acts 2:17-21.

<sup>240</sup> Acts 28:25-28.

<sup>241</sup> Acts 7:56.

<sup>242</sup> Hodge, Caroline Johnson "The Question of Identity: Gentiles As Gentiles – But Also Not – in Pauline Communities" in *Paul Within Judaism* p160.

<sup>243</sup> Nicklburg, George W. E. *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins: Diversity, Continuity and Transformation* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003 p183.

We can tell from scripture that the Sadducees and Pharisees considered themselves superior and were part of the ruling class, and that they separated themselves from 'sinners', but little more. It is interesting that these divisions do not seem to be an issue in the early Christian church. Apart from the dispute with the Hellenic Jews in Acts 6 and Paul's use of the fact that he was a Pharisee in his testimony, earlier Jewish divisions are not overtly mentioned.

It is significant for our study to note the early division among Jewish Christians as mentioned in Acts 6. James D G Dunn says this:

One conclusion follows almost immediately: that *the earliest Christian community embraced two fairly distinct groups more or less from the first* – Hebrews who spoke Aramaic (or Hebrew) as a badge of their Jewishness, and Hellenists who preferred to or who could converse only in Greek, presumably as the language more appropriate to a faith that made universalistic claims.<sup>244</sup>

Dunn goes on to explain that the more orthodox Hebrew Jewish Christians probably looked down on the Hellenists and that these tensions were latent in the early communities.

The religion and the rituals of the Jews are found in the first five books of the Old Testament or the Torah. We know that the Jewish teachers expanded on the Law, adding interpretations and details, creating a halakah or collection of laws, according to their different traditions. Later on, these came to be recorded as Mishnah and Talmud, but it is difficult to know what was considered Law during the oral period of these additions. As Chilton and Neusner pointed out there were many different interpretations available at the time of Jesus and the early church.<sup>245</sup> Karin Hedner Zetterholm expands on this:

A discussion of Paul's relation to the Torah is further complicated by the fact that we know very little about halakic observance in the first century. The various groups with their different halakic systems – Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Qumran community – aside, there were also the common people who likely did not belong to any group at all. Thus we cannot assume that a commonly established halakah existed, and there does not seem to be any uniform practice even within each of the halakic systems. For instance, the two famous first-century sages, Hillel and Shammai and their respective

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<sup>244</sup> Dunn, James D. G. *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*. London: SCM Press, 1990 p269.

<sup>245</sup> Chilton and Neusner *Judaism in the New Testament* p20.



disciple circles, both seem to have been associated with the Pharisaic movement, but rabbinic sources record numerous legal disputes between them.<sup>246</sup>

*“That word halakah is new to me! I like the sound. Isn’t it something like the All Blacks rugby team does?”<sup>247</sup>*

*“Oh, I do apologise for the disturbance made by the setting up. The team did come highly recommended! Excuse me. Please carry on with your work and don’t be ridiculous.”*

As noted earlier, the ‘works of the law’ or practical observances of the Torah were considered a defining feature of the Jews in the diaspora. In particular, circumcision, various table regulations and remembering the Sabbath and festival days were distinctive.<sup>248</sup>

### **Pharisaic theology**

N.T. Wright has greatly expanded the work started by Sanders. As commentators such as Alan Segal point out in trying to understand the writer Paul, “The lack of information about Paul’s upbringing is partly due to our sparse knowledge of Pharisaism. We have little information about Pharisaism in the first century, let alone what form the Pharisees could have assumed in the Diaspora.”<sup>249</sup> By researching written material describing the Jewish world from both before and after the time of Jesus and Paul he has sought to understand more of the period between. Because the Pharisaic tradition dominated the period after the fall of Jerusalem, it is possible to work out something of the theology of the Pharisees. Wright says that three key points of Pharisaic belief contain all others – these are monotheism, election and eschatology – or one God, one people and one future.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Zetterholm, Karin Hedner “The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century” in *Paul Within Judaism* p91.

<sup>247</sup> No, it’s not the haka. (The haka is the pre-match war cry of the New Zealand national rugby team known as the All Blacks.)

<sup>248</sup> Boyarin *A Radical Jew* p53.

<sup>249</sup> Segal, Alan F. *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* London: Yale University Press, 1990 p26.

<sup>250</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* p179-195.

We hear Wright briefly on each of these as his words attempt to bring the Jewish voice to life – being aware that this is just one aspect of the voice, the one that we are able to define most clearly. Firstly, monotheism:

The fundamental Jewish confession, the Shema, is not a mere intellectual assent to a proposition about the inner being of the one God. It is a commitment, a moment as it were of saluting the flag, a personal statement of allegiance to *this God in particular*.<sup>251</sup>

Secondly, election:

Jewish monotheism offers, as its basic solution to the problem of evil, belief in election, in the creator's choice of a people as his own, to serve his larger purposes. . . . 'Election' is a way of talking about Abraham, about the covenant, and not least about the Torah: Torah is God's gift, not indeed to the nations but specifically to Israel to enable his people to know him and to live that genuinely human life of which Torah offers the outline.<sup>252</sup>

And thirdly, eschatology:

There is one future for God's world, the future when God will do what he promised in the Prophets and the Psalms, and bring to completion the great story in which the world had been living, the story to which Israel had the clue in its scriptures. When that happens, when 'the age to come' arrives, God will judge the wicked and vindicate his people, bringing to birth his sovereign and healing rule in the renewed cosmos, raising the righteous dead to a new bodily life so that they can share this new world – indeed, so that they may share in running it .<sup>253</sup>

*"So were the Jewish Christians still Jews, or what? I thought there was a major break – why am I bothering with learning this stuff? I was hired to be a Christian Jew!"*

*"Sh! Just keep reading, you will see. We don't know even that Jesus-followers thought of themselves as Christians, and certainly not in the way we do today."*<sup>254</sup>

Karin Hedner Zetterholm has also devoted time to trying to make sense of first century Judaism using the information that we have of the proximate periods. She proposes that the Jews living in Graeco-Roman areas adapted their Jewish law to

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<sup>251</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* p179.

<sup>252</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* p181-182.

<sup>253</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* p183.

<sup>254</sup> Hodge, Caroline "The Question of Identity" p154.

create a halakah that allowed the Jews to function within a pagan society and yet be true to the core values of the Torah:

Thus Jewish law is more than just detailed prescriptions or prohibitions concerning specific situations. The detailed laws are based on the Torah's ethical principles and the Jews' perception of God, and these two parts of Jewish law - its body and soul, as it were – are intimately connected so that the specific laws translate moral values into concrete modes of behaviour. The foundation of Jewish law is the belief in a moral God; Thus, the law in interpreted and shaped by moral considerations.<sup>255</sup>

Western modern thinking which may understand obedience to the Torah in the same way as it might see obedience to a set of instructions for assembling a machine is thus at odds with early rabbinic tradition. This tradition was willing to set aside a particular instruction in the Torah if it was believed to lower the tone of the Torah in general in a particular context. Zetterholm gives the examples of 'an eye for an eye', which was seen as incompatible with a moral God and where tradition reinterprets the words to mean monetary compensation.<sup>256</sup>

Zetterholm further goes on to describe Paul's instructions regarding the meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10. She convincingly shows that Paul need not be breaking with Jewish law, but rather offering a practical advancement to the Halakah – or even explaining an existing amendment.<sup>257</sup>

For our purposes, we acknowledge the Jews in the Diaspora as being people who observed the Torah, however we cannot be sure how the understanding of the Torah evolved in particular contexts. The beliefs of Jesus-followers may have been seen as a new Halakah, rather than a turning away from the Torah.

#### 4.3.5 Gentiles who believed

*"I think this is where I fit in. The notes say that I followed Jewish ways, but didn't stop being a Gentile. Was that allowed – did it really happen?"*

As with so much of this period, the exact situation is unclear. "There is ... general agreement that the behaviour and destiny of 'righteous gentiles' or 'God-fearers' in the context of their association with the Jewish community was of

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<sup>255</sup> Zetterholm, Karin Hedner "The Question of Assumptions" p83-84.

<sup>256</sup> Zetterholm, Karin Hedner "The Question of Assumptions" p82.

<sup>257</sup> Zetterholm, Karin Hedner "The Question of Assumptions" p91-103.

considerable concern in the period we are examining, even though the exact details of these labels are debatable.”<sup>258</sup>

When Gentiles became part of the Christ-following community, there were elements of Jewish religious observance that were considered so important that even Gentile Christians should observe them. These are to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from meat from strangled animals and from blood.<sup>259</sup> This flows out of the fact that there were gentiles who followed Jewish ways and may even have worshipped in their synagogues with them.<sup>260</sup>

The Jews recognised a special status for gentiles who did not embrace the Law in its fullness but who could share in the hope of salvation; behind the covenant with Moses, when God gave the Law to his people, there was the covenant with Noah. These gentiles were called ‘Godfearers’.<sup>261</sup>

They were encouraged to observe what were in later Rabbinic times thought of as the Noahide Commandments and may have been drawn from the laws for strangers and ‘resident aliens’ found in the Law of Moses.<sup>262</sup> These laws were similar to those laid upon the Jewish Christians and Gentiles were in general exempt from observing all 613 laws of the Torah.<sup>263</sup>

As Paula Frederiksen describes it, “Pagans living with Jews in turn encountered the Jewish god, and variously found ways to worship him.”<sup>264</sup> Some of these became converts. “More conventionally, however, pagans could simply ‘visit with’ Jews, and thus with their god.”<sup>265</sup> Usually the barrier to full conversion was distaste for circumcision – a permanent physical act that would align the convert with the Jews. Boyarin writes:

The fraughtness of circumcision (almost obsession with it) of all these people is not to be found in the difficulty of the rite to perform but in the way that it is the most complete sign of the connection of the Torah to the concrete body of Israel. People of late antiquity were willing to do many extreme and painful

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<sup>258</sup> Nanos, Mark D. *The Mystery of Romans* p50.

<sup>259</sup> Acts 15:20.

<sup>260</sup> Elliott, Neil “The Question of Politics: Paul as a Diaspora Jew under Roman Rule” in *Paul Within Judaism* p216.

<sup>261</sup> Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p14.

<sup>262</sup> Nanos, Mark *Mystery of Romans* p51.

<sup>263</sup> Nano, Mark *Mystery of Romans* p52.

<sup>264</sup> Frederiksen, Paula “The Question of Worship: Gods, Pagans and the Redemption of Israel” in *Paul Within Judaism* p182.

<sup>265</sup> Frederiksen, Paula “The Question of Worship” p183.

things for religion. It is absurd to imagine that circumcision would have stood in the way of conversion for people who were willing to undergo fasts, the lives of anchorites, martyrdom, and even occasionally castration for the sake of God. The aversion to circumcision must have a different explanation, a cultural one.<sup>266</sup>

*One of the actors emitted a vulgar sound which may have been laughter. "Hur, hur, hur. He's right there, isn't he?"*

*"What do you mean?"*

*"You know, the story we found that was left out of the notes. Hur, hur – the one about the actor whose –ahem- 'loincloth' slipped. And everyone saw he was circumcised, and they laughed and "*<sup>267</sup>

*"Yes, alright. Shush now, your laughing is making everyone look over here. Anyway, circumcision wasn't necessary, according to Paul."*

With the advent of Jesus's teaching and its acceptance by Gentiles there came to be a third category of believer and that was Gentiles who had no connection with the Jewish practices. They were not Jews, but in accepting the Jew, Jesus, they were associated with the Jews, but not in the same way as the 'Godfearers'. "These gentiles occupy an in-between space, hovering around borders of identities that they are not quite."<sup>268</sup> They shared the future of the Jews who followed Jesus, but not their past.

#### 4.3.6 Apocalyptic

About the time of Paul – or rather just shortly before – a genre of literature, which has come to be called apocalyptic, came about. Parts of the books of Daniel and Revelation are typical of this genre. We still do not know if this literature was created by a group of people who could be called a movement or how the various books came to be written.

*"Sigh. More to read and learn. Is this necessary?"*

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<sup>266</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew* p36.

<sup>267</sup> Green, Bernard referring to the writings of Martial, *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p12.

<sup>268</sup> Hodge, Caroline Johnson "The Question of Identity" p154.

*“We really can’t cover everything you should know, but we are doing what we can. Some people think this writing is important for understanding the time when Paul wrote. We just touch on it briefly! Besides, it is actually quite interesting.”*

James Vanderkam, on looking into how it happened that Christians came to call these writings apocalypses, concludes that the term was borrowed from pagan writers of religious texts. The term, apart from its literal meaning of ‘revelation’ came to mean the ‘revelation of very great secrets’. More than that it was the revelation of divine secrets which were beyond the usual grasp of human beings. This sense of secrecy was an important part of the genre.<sup>269</sup>

E.P. Sanders, as related by John J. Collins, in attempting to define the genre suggests that it bears a relation to Old Testament prophecy. Collins points out that “the attractiveness of this proposal lies in the simplicity with which Sanders can then view the social function of the genre as literature of the oppressed,” however, “it may also be that Sanders’s view of the function is too simple.”<sup>270</sup> Nonetheless, these two points of view do suggest writings by people who are looking for hope and help beyond their present situation, giving us an idea of the mindset of the people at the time.

Collins describes apocalypses thus:

The form of the apocalypses involves a narrative framework that describes the manner of revelation. The main means of revelation are visions and otherworldly journeys, supplemented by discourse or dialogue and occasionally by a heavenly book. The constant element is the presence of an angel who interprets the vision or serves as a guide on the otherworldly journey.<sup>271</sup>

Klaus Koch who pioneered the idea of the apocalyptic as a movement described eight clusters of motifs which are summarised by Collins<sup>272</sup> as follows:

*“Wait! Joe and I know these! We will call them out!”*

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<sup>269</sup> VanderKam, James C. *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* Assen: Van Gorcum (Fortress Press), 1996 p10-11.

<sup>270</sup> Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature Third Edition* Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2016 p11-12.

<sup>271</sup> Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination* p6.

<sup>272</sup> Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination* p15, Koch, Klaus *The Rediscovery of the Apocalyptic* SCM Press, 1972 p28-33. The actual phrases are 1) urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future; (2) the end as a cosmic catastrophe; (3) periodization and

*"1. The world will end soon."*

*"2. It will be a catastrophe of cosmic proportions."*

*"3. Events in the past and the future are linked by a PLAN (I hope I got this one! 'periodization and determinism?')"*

*"4. Angels and demons are at work in our world."*

*"5. But all will end well. Heaven is in sight."*

*"6. God will be triumphant and reign in his kingdom."*

*"7. We will see the rise of a priest-king."*

*"8. Glory, glory, glory. (Hallelujah). How did we do?"*

*"Thank you for your efforts. I refer the serious reader to the footnotes, however."*

Without going into the details of each of these, we are left with the impression of a deep belief in the supernatural realms, a belief in the possibility of salvation from present troubles and a conviction of a hopeful future.

*"So did Paul know about this stuff? Is it really relevant?"*

*"Look in the notes - at the words of Alan Segal."*

Paul describes his own spiritual experiences in terms appropriate to a Jewish apocalyptic-mystagogue of the first century. He, like Enoch, relates his experiences of heavenly travel, in which he sees the secrets of the universe revealed. He believes his salvation to lie in a body-to-body identification with his heavenly savior, who sits on the divine throne and functions as God's glorious manifestation. He identifies this experience with his conversion, although it apparently characterizes a lifetime of spiritual discipline rather than a single event. As we have seen, the significance of this experience is later reworked by the church when Paul's life is made in to the model for gentile conversion. In the later context, the mystical aspects of Paul's experiences are downplayed, and his new understanding of law becomes the primary value of his conversion.<sup>273</sup>

For Segal, Paul's experiences marked Paul's transition to a new way or his conversion. Neil Elliott maintains that these experiences were entirely consistent with

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determinism; (4) activity of angels and demons; (5) new salvation, paradisaic in character; (6) manifestation of the kingdom of God; (7) a mediator with royal functions; (8) the catchword "glory".

<sup>273</sup> Segal *Paul the Convert* p35, see also Roetzel, Calvin J. *The Letters of Paul* p45-46.

Jewish idea of apocalypse and that talk of conversion is unnecessary.<sup>274</sup> Either way, we see the influence of the apocalyptic way of thinking on both the Jews and the early Jesus-followers.

#### 4.4 The Graeco-Roman Context

We know significantly more about the Graeco-Roman context of first century Rome, however there is still the danger of assuming that society was more homogeneous than it was. In general, we know more about wealthier, more privileged parts of society and less about the poorer parts. We also need to do some extrapolation from before the first century and from beyond the first century to fill in gaps about the actual era under discussion. We do know enough to begin to get a feel for how non-Jews may have heard Paul's words.

##### 4.4.1 Empires and Emperors

*"Right, listen up, all of you who playing people living in Rome. Hear a bit about your heritage!" The speaker struck a pose as he quoted:*

*When Paul was converted, the Roman empire as such was two generations old. The ancient and venerable Roman Republic had collapsed into civil war following the murder of Julius Caesar. Several years of bloody and divisive conflict had eventually led to the emergence of Octavian, Caesar's adopted heir, who took the title Augustus and reigned supreme over Rome and its burgeoning empire from the last two decades BC and the first fourteen years AD. His adopted heir Tiberius carried on and consolidated his work, being followed by the disastrous Gaius Caligula and the shrewd but weak Claudius. Claudius' death in AD54 left the way clear for Nero, who came to the throne in a blaze of optimism as a bright new hope, and left it, mourned by some, loathed by many, in 68, precipitating the so-called 'year of the four emperors', a few brief months of total chaos ended by Vespasian establishing a new dynasty. During this period the empire stretched right around the Mediterranean world and some distance into much of the hinterland. Having seen off its main rival, Carthage, some centuries before, Rome sat in luxury at the middle of a web of power, influence and money.<sup>275</sup>*

*"We are interested in Nero's reign aren't we?"*

*"Yes, the early years, but the impact of Augustus was still in force, in spite of the weak intervening kings, and the values and ideals of the Roman republic were being transformed into those of the empire."*

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<sup>274</sup> Elliott, Neil "The Question of Politics" p218-220.

<sup>275</sup> Wright Fresh Perspectives p63.



As Wright says, “Freedom, justice, peace and salvation were the imperial themes that you would expect to meet in the mass media of the ancient world.”<sup>276</sup>

*“Here is a bit more about Nero.” Once again, a pose was struck.*

*Nero came to power with the pledge to restore the Senate and the rule of law, and was celebrated for ushering in a golden age. He promoted Greek values with an aim of civilising the Roman upper class and promised to cease the practice of issuing commands through imperial agents. . . . At the time Romans was written . . . the Nero administration was providing an exemplary form of government and law enforcement, despite the profligate habits of Nero himself – an aggressive bisexual who enjoyed stalking the streets of Rome with his crowd of sycophants demanding sexual services from passersby and “indulging in brawls and petty thievery.”<sup>277</sup>*

*“Pretty character, wasn’t he? But then, it’s not for me to judge. A humble actor am I!”*

#### 4.4.2 Religion

*“Oh yes, the Greek gods. I know all about them from Percy Jackson<sup>278</sup> - the books that my kids read. Olympus and all that. But there were also Roman gods weren’t there? It’s quite confusing actually.”*

*“Then be quiet and listen for a while! Maybe you will learn something.”*

As with much of the history of Rome, our knowledge of its religion is based mostly on writings from a later time. Using these, William E. Dunstan gives a concise summary of early Roman religion:

Clearly, religion did not constitute a separate area of life in Rome but so permeated the political and social structure that every group or activity possessed a sacred aspect. The Romans acknowledged a multitude of divinities and regarded them as present virtually everywhere, but their chief religious devotion centred on the family and, by extension, the state. While strictly observing ancient rites in the manner decreed by tradition, followers of Roman religion continually introduced new deities. From an early time the Romans, under Greek influence, began to adopt and worship Greek gods, while also seeking to equate many of their own divine beings with appropriate members of the Greek pantheon. The Greek had developed colourful stories to explain the relationships of their deities to one another and to humankind, and the mythology of later Roman religion betrays a strong debt.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Wright *Fresh Perspectives* p63.

<sup>277</sup> Jewett *Romans* p47-48.

<sup>278</sup> A reference to the young adult fantasy fiction written by Rick Riordan.

<sup>279</sup> Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010 p29.

Dunstan describes two categories of gods worshiped by the Romans.<sup>280</sup>

The first were gods of the house and field, or the domestic cult. These were local, family gods and were believed to oversee every family activity from births to deaths. They also had a protective role. Spirits called *Lares* were particularly honoured and it was believed that each household had a *Lar familiaris*. The origin of this belief is obscure and controversial, so we just acknowledge that it existed. The *genius* or unique spirit of the male head of the family was also respected and worshiped on that person's birthday.

An element of the domestic cult was the honouring of ancestral spirits. J. Albert Harrill writing about slavery gives this insight into the domestic cult:

The religious life of domestic slaves, whether in houses or apartments, required participation in the daily ritual of the household cult, which centred around the family guardian spirit (*lares*) that represented the ancestral spirit (*genius*) of the estate owner (*pater familias*). During one January rite (the *Compitalia*), the family hung male and female dolls for each free member of the household (*domus*) but a woollen ball for each slave. While the ritual integrated slaves as family members, the representation nonetheless also subordinated them as dehumanised, genderless balls.<sup>281</sup>

A particular ritual was the day of Saturnalia, which was religious festival for the benefit of slaves.<sup>282</sup> On this day, banquet customs that reinforced status were reversed and all people were to be treated as equal.<sup>283</sup> Patrons would indulge their clients with gifts or invite them to a meal.<sup>284</sup>

The second were the gods of the state or civic cult. These included many of the household gods as well as the Olympian gods such as Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Mars, Vulcan and Saturn. Each of these had their specific areas of influence such as Mars over war and Vulcan over destructive fire. The Romans absorbed gods from other towns and areas in order to meet their needs.

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<sup>280</sup> Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome* p31-34.

<sup>281</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley) Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p584.

<sup>282</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" p584.

<sup>283</sup> Balch, David L. "Paul, Families, and Households" in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley) Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p273.

<sup>284</sup> Lampe, Peter "Paul, Patrons and Clients" in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley) Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p492.

Early Roman worship had the goal of keeping peace between humanity and the gods. The major components were animal sacrifice, prayer, purification rituals and vows.<sup>285</sup> They also believed in forms of magic and taboos.<sup>286</sup>

The first century also saw the continued rise of the Emperor cult, which by this time had likely spread across the empire.<sup>287</sup> Jewett tells us that the Romans traditionally “hated the divinisation of human beings”<sup>288</sup> and yet when Augustus (also known as Octavius) became ruler he, by means of propaganda, persuaded his followers to honour him, positioning himself as Apollo to the people. This began the period of the ruler cult – or emperor cult – which was identified with the civic cult of the Roman gods.

Octavius arranged for extravagant honors devoted to himself and for his statue to be placed next to the speaker’s rostrum in the forum. He was called the ‘Son of the Divine Saviour’. . . . The sophisticated form of imperial propaganda developed by Octavian carried no overt elements of self-glorification but emphasized his Apolline role, now increasingly depicted in restored temples replete with traditional symbols of peace and tranquillity.<sup>289</sup>

Claudius was also acknowledged as a god, after his death, and Nero took the throne in a blaze of glory. Jewett says:

This followed the pattern of Augustus, who developed this masterpiece of propaganda, with the regent holding unlimited power and ostensibly resisting divinization while receiving divine honors as the humble Apollo who restores peace to the world.<sup>290</sup>

*“Ok, I see that Percy Jackson doesn’t cover it all. Where did the Jews and the Christians fit into the grand scheme of things? They couldn’t have been too happy about worshiping the emperor.”*

*“All in good time! Keep listening!”*

The Romans, in general, did not force any particular religion on people as they were incorporated into the empire. This meant that indigenous religions

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<sup>285</sup> Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome* p36.

<sup>286</sup> Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome* p30-31.

<sup>287</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p48, also Winter, Bruce W. *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians’ Responses* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015 p47.

<sup>288</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p48.

<sup>289</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p48.

<sup>290</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p49.

continued to be practised freely and there was great diversity of religious belief and practice. Robin Osborne comments that the Romans accepted religions that could be framed within their own civic cult, and describes their attitude to Judaism and Christianity as follows:

While the Romans did not automatically move to suppress all cults that fell outside the framework of its civic religion, the potential for conflict was ever present. We see this in the relationship of the Romans to Judaism, which was problematic because of its own strong identification of religious and political leadership. Roman attempts to capitalise on this by making the high priest a Roman political appointment met with limited success. While the Romans tried to incorporate Judaism by transforming it into another civic cult, they attempted to reject Christianity as not a religion at all but, like the practices of some of the people of central Italy in early centuries, *superstitions*. Christians neither accepted animal sacrifice nor integrated themselves into the civic structure.<sup>291</sup>

*“That makes sense.” The speaker was clearly working through what he had heard. “They tried to incorporate these religions. I can work with that. There were other gods as well, weren’t there? What about the Egyptians’ gods?”*

*“Oh yes, there is much that hasn’t been said. Isis was a big one, for instance. For now we acknowledge the varied religious traditions found in Rome.”*

#### 4.4.3 Social Structure – Patronage

Today much of our social structure is defined by socio-economic status or class. During the time of the Roman Republic, and extending into the period of the Roman Empire, the biggest differentiator was not class, but rather patronage.

*“I’ve heard of this thing, Patron of the Arts. Does our team have a patron? How does it work?”*

*Someone laughed. “Maybe our patrons are Fauconnier and Turner! But we don’t live in Rome. Listen to this about horizontal and vertical relationships.”*

Peter Lampe describes the system of patronage in this way:

When describing modern societies, we tend to think in horizontal categories: in social strata, in lower, middle or upper classes. Horizontal layers also

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<sup>291</sup> Osborne, Robin “The Religious Contexts of Ancient Political Thought” in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought* (ed. Ryan K. Balot) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009 p118-130.

characterised the ancient society of the Roman Empire. At the same time, however, interaction between these social strata divided society into vertical sections as well. The individual inhabitants of the Roman Empire lived in vertical relationships of dependency. These relationships were characterised by the reciprocal exchange of services and goods between those of lower social status and those above them. In fact, these vertical relationships defined a person's identity much more than his or her social contacts on the horizontal level. "I belong to Caesar's household," or, "This senator is my patron, and I support his political causes, while he protects my economical and legal interests." Such statements defined a person's identity, not statements such as, "I belong to the working class." In general, class consciousness hardly existed in the Roman Empire. The cohesion, for example, among slaves or among lower-class people was very weak. Only the social elite, the members of the three noble classes (senators, equestrians, and, to some extent, the *decuriones*, the local elite), developed cohesion among themselves and a "class consciousness."<sup>292</sup>

Lampe describes three categories of person who could be associated with a patron.<sup>293</sup> The first was freed slaves. When slaves were freed, they were expected to remain under the patronage of the former master. There were duties that they were still required to fulfil out of faithfulness, rather than legal obligation, to their, now, patron. However, these freedmen did often become economically independent and even wealthy. They were often involved in business dealings on behalf of their patrons and could even become patrons themselves of other freedmen.

The second category was people born free who chose to associate themselves with a particular patrons, who were normally people of influence. They were known as clients. Sometimes this association was hereditary. Especially in the time of the empire when the connection between patron and client had ceased to have legal or political value, these relationships were based on mutual trust and loyalty – known as *fides* or *πιστις*. The client was required to treat the patron with respect and obedience while the patron would use his or her influence to protect the interests of the client.

These vertical-dependency relationships resulted in society being divided into groups belonging to the most influential families and patrons. During the time of the Republic, these had immense political power, but this had lessened during the time of the Empire. Often client and patron relationships went across families with some

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<sup>292</sup> Lampe, Peter "Paul, Patrons and Clients" p488.

<sup>293</sup> Lampe, Peter "Paul, Patrons and Clients" p488-493.

clients serving more than one patron. The number of clients that a patron had gave him honour and so a patron was always on the lookout for more clients.

The third category of people associated with patrons is communities. The conqueror of a particular territory could become its patron. A city could also choose a particular person to be its patron.

*“Slaves and conquered communities! Maybe I’m not interested in a patron anymore.”*

The size of the empire meant that there was no direct contact between the emperor and most of the population. This allowed for the growth of patronage hierarchies or networks. Those who were closer to the more important patrons and especially the emperor were able to function as mediators or brokers. These would assist in obtaining positions and various exchanges between patrons and clients. These particularly allowed a link between the city of Rome and the provinces.<sup>294</sup> Gifts and help - or benefactions – became obligations which required reciprocation which often reinforced the power differences.<sup>295</sup>

A patron could be any influential person who could afford to take on clients. Apart from protecting a client’s social or economic interest, a patron could also take on a person of talent and give them space to develop that talent. Naturally, the most important patron was the emperor.

*“Patronage would be ok if this is how it works. May be we should explore it for our team?”*

*“You who are busy with Conceptual Blending must be continually challenged by new ideas and concepts! Please feel free to pursue this one in your context, but do it in your own time? This is taking us off the track of the thesis.”*

Two key parts of Roman society that operated in and around the patronage system were the structures of family and slavery. We turn to these now.

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<sup>294</sup> Rice, Joshua *Paul and Patronage: The Dynamics of Power in 1 Corinthians* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2013 p43-44.

<sup>295</sup> Barclay, John M.G. *Paul and the Gift* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015 p38.

#### 4.4.4 Family

##### **Households<sup>296</sup>**

Knowledge of Greek and Roman housing has been gained through archaeological excavations of cities similar to Rome and around the period in which we are interested. There are undoubtedly many similarities from which we can learn. There were two main sorts of residence in Rome in the first century. The first is the *domus* which was a freestanding house built around an open courtyard and often possessed a garden.<sup>297</sup> The rooms led off from the courtyard. These houses were also known as atrium houses and owning one was a sign of status.<sup>298</sup> The other sort of dwellings was *insulae* which were apartment or tenement buildings. The apartment buildings were not necessarily only for poorer people as some excavations have found buildings that were clearly inhabited by the wealthy. Esler describes the *insulae* like this:

Because of Rome's huge population, settled on a comparatively small area, there was always a shortage of land for housing it. While the elite lived in the atrium-style *domus*, the rest of the population generally made do by renting apartments in the numerous tenement blocks called *insulae*, often built many storeys high over narrow streets. *Insulae* varied in quality. Wealthier members of the population not able to afford spacious atrium style housing rented *insulae* of the best quality. The standard of the accommodation decreased in the upper levels, where the rents were lower and the poor rented rooms. The poorest made do with miserable garrets at the tops of dirty stairs. For everyone rents were high, and falling into debt to pay them was a common problem for the urban poor, and even for wealthy tenants.<sup>299</sup>

Within each household there would have been a mixture of classes. Wealthy people living in atrium houses, and *insulae*, would have had slaves living with them and often their clients.

Homes were used for business and there was often little privacy for the family. Doors were left open and people could simply wander in. Homes were social and business centres and the difference between public space and private space was not defined as it is today. An apartment used for business, perhaps including a workshop

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<sup>296</sup> Unless otherwise referenced information was sourced from Balch, David L. "Paul, Families, and Households" p258-274.

<sup>297</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p80.

<sup>298</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p80.

<sup>299</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p82.

and housing a number of slaves in the household may have been in the region of 300 square metres in size. The smallest apartments would have been rented by migrant workers and artisans who lived in one crowded room of between 20 and 99 square metres.<sup>300</sup>

Houses were highly decorated with paintings and other artwork. Even smaller houses made space for the latest in sophisticated décor, resulting in an ostentatious appearance.

Slaves usually had their own quarters which, while in the same building, were separated from the rest of the house by distance. The kitchens and other slave areas were also often somewhat apart. These areas were not decorated in the same way and were either painted with stripes or left completely barren.

Meals were an occasion to reinforce status. According to Greek custom, men usually reclined on a couch while women and children sat on chairs and stools. At formal occasions, women would eat separately. In Roman households of the first century, women were more usually present at the meal, and may even have reclined with the men. They were waited on by slaves.

While households were usually headed by men, there are archaeological indications that many were headed by women.

*“That’s important! We women are often told that only men were significant in Bible times. Not true! Even if we were overshadowed.”*

### ***Pater Familias***<sup>301</sup>

*Pater familias* can be translated as ‘father of the family’, but the meaning in the Graeco-Roman world goes beyond what would be expected from one used to a modern-day western conception of both family and fatherhood. White says:

The term *familia* was not limited to the “nuclear family” consisting of parents and children, as it is commonly applied in the modern world. Instead, the *familia* in the Roman world was both a legal and a social designation for the larger “household” (or *domus*), modelled after the patrician social structure of

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<sup>300</sup> Maier, Harry O. *Picturing Paul in Empire: Imperial Image, Text and Persuasion in Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles* London: Bloomsbury, 2013 p13.

<sup>301</sup> Unless otherwise referenced information was sourced from White, L. Michael “Paul and Pater Familias” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley) Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p457-463.



Republican Rome. Thus the *familia* normally included parents and children, along with other relatives (agnates and cognates), the domestic slaves, and a coterie of other dependents, freedmen or clients. From a strictly legal perspective the word *familia* could also mean the property of an estate that was inherited by the heirs or other agnate kin.<sup>302</sup>

He continues to talk about the *pater* element:

The *pater familias* stood as the ultimate source of power and authority in the household. This notion, called *patria potestas* ("paternal power"), was the father's hereditary rule over the goods, possessions, and people belonging to his patrimonial estate. In legal discussions, many of the concepts of public law, administration and statecraft were patterned after this idealised notion of paternal rule over the household. At root stood the conception of the extended *familia* and its social structure as a microcosm of the state.<sup>303</sup>

White describes both the powers and the obligations of the *pater familias*. His power over the family was nearly absolute. He could punish slaves at will, kill newborn babies and allow or disallow the marriages of both his sons and daughters. Children (even when adults) were almost like slaves until the father died. The *pater familias* also had sexual power over the entire household. He did not have power over his wife's assets, which stayed under the ultimate ownership of her father. When that father died, the assets became hers alone and did not go to the husband.

The duties, on the other hand, were also extensive. He needed to provide food and care to the whole household and was required to oversee the estate. There was some sense of a moral obligation. "The quintessential Roman virtue of *pietas* ("piety, loyalty") described both the duties of children to obey parents and the devotion of fathers to wives and children."<sup>304</sup> He was also responsible for various obligations to the state. He was a public figure and the good name and status of his family depended on his actions. Thus he may hold festivals or games as well as manage the political role of the family through intermarriage and other ways.

White records an interesting letter written by Pliny the Younger. The letter was written to warn its recipient against the dangers of excess and status.

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<sup>302</sup> White, L. Michael "Paul and Pater Familias" p457.

<sup>303</sup> White, L. Michael "Paul and Pater Familias" p458.

<sup>304</sup> White, L. Michael "Paul and Pater Familias" p458.

*“Ah, my turn again,” said the young man of the oratorical persuasion. “Hear ye all my story.”*

*It would take too long to recount how it happened that I, though not one of his familiars, was with a certain man for a dinner that seemed to him to be lavish though frugal but which seemed to me to be meagre yet extravagant. The best dishes were for himself and a select few, while cheap morsels were served to the rest. He even assigned the wine in tiny little flasks into three categories, not so that a person might be able to choose, but so that he might not have the right to refuse what he was given. One was for himself and for us; another for his lesser friends (even his “friends” have grades); and another for his freedmen. The man who was reclining closest to me took note [of this] and asked whether I approved. I said, “No.” “What procedure do you follow, then?” he asked. “I serve the same to everyone,” [I replied], “for I invite people to a dinner, not to make a show of inequalities; rather, I make them equals at the same table and with the same treatment.” “Even the freedmen?” [he asked]. “Certainly, for then they are my fellow-diners, not just freedmen.”<sup>305</sup>*

#### 4.4.5 Slavery<sup>306</sup>

*“And now onto slavery. Swing low sweet chariot – I love those old spiritual songs.”*

*“No, no. Slavery then was very different to the slavery you are imagining. We will look at what it was actually like, but please remember that almost all of our information is from the point of view of the slave-owning classes and so there is a bias. It was, however, a key part of society.”*

Sheila Briggs tells us:

Yet, slavery was not just one aspect of Greco-Roman society; the Roman Empire was a slave society. Slavery pervaded materially and ideologically the whole sociocultural domain and therefore was integral to social functions and cultural productions that in non-slave-owning societies are implemented in other ways.<sup>307</sup>

Slave societies are not defined as such because of the number of slaves, but by the integration of slaves into the economy and the community. In other words, Roman society would have failed to function if slaves were removed.

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<sup>305</sup> White, L. Michael “Paul and Pater Familias” p463.

<sup>306</sup> Unless otherwise referenced information was sourced from Harrill, J. Albert “Paul and Slavery” p575-585.

<sup>307</sup> Briggs, Sheila “Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society” in *Paul and Politics* (ed. Richard Horsley) Harrisburg:Trinity Press, 2000 p110.

People came into Roman slavery via a number of ways. Many were born of slave parents. Others were bought from overseas trade, captured in wars or kidnapped. Infants left exposed to die were often taken as slaves and slavery was a punishment for crime. These slaves came from all over the Roman Empire, and were not selected based on race or skin colour.

Roman slavery differed from earlier Greek slavery and Aristotle's description of slaves as being fit only for slavery did not fit the Roman conception of slaves. For the Romans, slavery was a "product of fate and not nature: slaves were fellow human beings who just happened to have bad luck."<sup>308</sup> They, however, did not see slavery as morally wrong.

Slaves were considered the property of their owners, but this does not adequately describe the status of a slave as others in Roman culture, such as children, were also seen as property. Harrill points out that it was the total domination of slaves that defined who they were. Briggs puts it like this:

Because slavery is a process or set of processes of domination, it is always related to the signification of power and powerlessness in the cultures where it exists. However, under slavery the discourse of power has a "double," what I will here call the discourse of evasion. The raw exercise of power, the display of the unlimited subjugation of the slave, can only be sustained if it is embedded in a broader field of social relations that stubbornly resists the coercive character of slavery becoming the focus of attention.<sup>309</sup>

Harrill, referring back to the work of Jamaican sociologist Orlando Patterson, describes three forces that are necessary for the domination of slavery.<sup>310</sup> These are direct and insidious violence, nameless and alienating social death, and general dishonour. These were all aspects present in Roman society. Harrill recounts the story of Pedanius Secundus who was murdered by his own slave in 61 CE. The sentence given shows the lack of rights given to slaves:

After some debate and despite protests from the populace about the innocents, the senate ordered, in accordance with ancient custom, the immediate execution of *all* slaves living under the same roof, in this case four

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<sup>308</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" p576.

<sup>309</sup> Briggs, Sheila "Paul on Bondage and Freedom in Imperial Roman Society" p110.

<sup>310</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" p577. Patterson, Orlando *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982 p1-34.

hundred lives, no matter how loyal or high ranking, as an example to others of how Rome would respond to the murder of a slaveholder.<sup>311</sup>

Slaves were also vulnerable to rape, forced prostitution and other forms of sexual abuse.

*"That's awful. I'm not sure I want to be part of this thesis anymore. Is this really necessary?"*

*"Just be glad that you are only an actor!"*

On the other hand, slaves could be prized by their masters and could be highly influential people in their own right. Some received an income from their work and others, especially those belonging to the emperor's household, had access to greater privileges. Some were highly educated and some occupied important positions and administrative posts in the empire. They were even able to own slaves themselves.

This was, however, not the normal lot of the slave as Harrill also notes:

Most slaves were of quite modest means and worked as ordinary labourers or as specialised domestics. Because slaves could be found at all economic levels of society, they had no cohesion as a group and lacked anything akin to class consciousness.<sup>312</sup>

Roman law allowed slaves to be freed or manumitted. While slaves desired this freedom, a freedman was still required to have loyalties to his or her former owner and there was still a distinction between those who were born free and those who had become freedmen. MacMullen suggests that, in fact, the most disadvantaged of the people were the 'free poor' who had neither the advantages of wealthy family nor the protection of slavery and probably formed the bulk of the poorest section of society.<sup>313</sup>

Thus society consisted of slaves, freedmen and those born free, however as noted above, these class distinctions were not as influential in society as the vertical distinctions resulting from the patronage system.

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<sup>311</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" p575.

<sup>312</sup> Harrill, J. Albert "Paul and Slavery" p583.

<sup>313</sup> MacMullen, Ramsay *Roman Social Relations* London: Yale University Press, 1974 p92-93.

Slaves were allowed to follow their own religions and Harrill tells us that “Joining a cult was not only a sign of slave independence but also of some resistance to the social death imposed by the master’s realm.”<sup>314</sup>

So we see that slaves becoming Christians may have done so in order to achieve a better sense of both identity and significance.

*“I would too! Alright, I’m starting to get an idea of what formed my character in these blends. I’m getting under the skin.”*

#### 4.4.6 Honour and Shame<sup>315</sup>

Although I have included this under the Graeco-Roman heading, the concepts of honour and shame were pivotal across the Mediterranean world. For our purposes, we recognise that these would have characterised Jews as well as Greeks and Romans.

*“Yes, Jews would have lived within the Graeco-Roman culture. Slavery, patronage, and so on would also have been part of my Judean character. It’s not always so cut and dried.”*

*“I read this about honour and shame. I know it’s recent and by a ‘popular’ writer. But it helped me understand. May I read it? Thanks!”*

*Cultures of honor tend to take root in highlands and other marginally fertile areas, such as Sicily or the mountainous Basque regions of Spain. If you live on some rocky mountainside, the explanation goes, you can’t farm. You probably raise goats or sheep, and the kind of culture that grows up around being a herdsman is very different from the culture that grows up around growing crops. The survival of a farmer depends on the cooperation of others in the community. But a herdsman is off by himself. Farmers also don’t have to worry that their livelihood will be stolen in the night, because crops can’t easily be stolen unless, of course, a thief wants to go to the trouble of harvesting an entire field on his own. But a herdsman does have to worry. He’s under constant threat of ruin through loss of his animals. So he has to be aggressive: he has to make it clear, through his words and deeds, that he is not weak. He has to be willing to fight in response to even the slightest challenge to his reputation – and that’s what a “culture of honor” means. It’s a world where a man’s reputation is at the centre of his livelihood and self-worth.*

*“The critical moment in the development of the young shepherd’s reputation is his first quarrel,” the ethnographer J.K. Campbell writes of one herding culture in*

<sup>314</sup> Harrill, J. Albert “Paul and Slavery” p584.

<sup>315</sup> Unless otherwise referenced information was sourced from Malina, Bruce *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* Westminster: John Knox Press, 2001 p27-57.

Greece. "Quarrels are necessarily public. They may occur in the coffee shop, the village square, or most frequently on a grazing boundary where a curse or a stone aimed at one of his straying sheep by another shepherd is an insult which inevitably requires a violent response."<sup>316</sup>

In the first century and before the constant threats would have been different – and in times of war whole fields may well have been stolen (think of Gideon threshing wheat in the winepress<sup>317</sup>) – but this idea of responding to challenges to one's reputation is exactly what we are looking at here. Malina defines honour in the Mediterranean area in the first century in a congruent manner:

Honor is the value of a person in his or her own eyes (that is, one's claim to worth) *plus* that person's value in the eyes of his or her social group. Honor is a claim to worth along with the social acknowledgement of worth.<sup>318</sup>

This honour was gained essentially by one's loyal adherence to the cultural values of the family. Identity was defined by the family and acceptance by the family was conditional on a "person's adhering to the traditional rules of order by which Mediterranean families are organized and maintained."<sup>319</sup>

We can see then, that while we speak of honour and shame cultures, honour and shame are involved in forming a framework for the culture and ensuring the persistence of that culture and its traditional rituals and values. The values and rituals themselves, as well as other elements of culture, are not necessarily defined by honour and shame, but rather reinforced by them. Thus it is possible for rather different cultures, such as the Jewish and Graeco-Roman, to both be honour and shame cultures.

There is more to honour, however, than simple adherence to tradition. Malina suggests that honour is found where three features come together. These are authority, gender status and respect.<sup>320</sup> By authority, he means the ability to control others – this might be held by a father, a general or a king for instance. In many cultures there are different obligations held by and owed to people according to their gender. A mother may be entitled to certain treatment, for instance, while a father is

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<sup>316</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm *Outliers: The Story of Success* London: Penguin Books, 2009 p166-167.

<sup>317</sup> Judges 6:1-11.

<sup>318</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p30.

<sup>319</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p29.

<sup>320</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p29.

also entitled to certain treatment, although that treatment is different. Respect means that the honour is recognised by others.

An important feature of honour and shame cultures is that while an individual may hold honour or may be shamed, the greatest impact is on the group to which individuals belong. Thus if a woman is sexually immoral (or otherwise acts against a cultural norm), the whole family is shamed. If honour is to be regained, her father or one of her brothers needs to respond in order to regain the family's honour. A neighbourhood, village or region could also hold honour, or lack honour – as seen by some generalisations in the New Testament, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”<sup>321</sup> These groups exist within the context of the patronage system in the Graeco-Roman culture. There may also be voluntary groupings created out of necessity for mutual benefit. Malina suggests, “some such optional groupings in the first century would be trade guilds, municipalities (systems of villages), cities with republican forms of government, elective burial organisations, and Palestinian parties such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the like.”<sup>322</sup> It is quite likely that Christian groups would have automatically become smaller ‘honour and shame’ groups.

Honour and shame were cultivated or lost through a series of challenges and responses. These could be ‘good’ such as the giving of a gift, or the elevating of position in a patron-client relationship. They could be ‘bad’ such physical hurt or even murder or just an insult. The response of the other party to the challenge reflected on their own honour. The worst thing to do was to ignore the situation. This gave the impression that one was not able to look after one's own honour or the honour of the group. The response needed to be appropriate to the challenge – which made it very difficult for people to decide how to respond – but the outcome of the response was less important than the intention. Thus if one responded with an invitation to fight, but lost the fight, honour was nonetheless regained – or shame was at least held provisionally in abeyance.

Malina uses the helpful analogy of a credit rating. In the Western world today, we value a good credit rating as it shows our integrity and is an indication of our

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<sup>321</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p44.

<sup>322</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p44.

worth in society and our reliability. In the first century, individuals and groups had implicit 'honour ratings' which performed a similar function.<sup>323</sup>

In general, people were only concerned with those of equal honour to themselves<sup>324</sup> and the squabbling was about proving themselves worthy or others unworthy of the association. The head of each group would have had no equal within the group and thus was untouchable. He had the ultimate say in what was right or wrong<sup>325</sup> and was responsible for the overall honour of the group.<sup>326</sup>

I conclude this section with a quote from Robert Jewett's work which shows the place of honour and shame in the context of the Graeco-Roman life.

The classicist E.A. Judge confirms the broad cultural tradition that viewed the earning of honor as the only suitable goal for life, despite its dangers. He describes the social attitudes that continued from the classical period down to the later Greco-Roman culture:

By New Testament times the predominant Stoic school of philosophy had raised the estimate [of the value of glory] to a very high level, apparently in response to the cult of glory among the Roman nobility. It was held that the winning of glory was the only adequate reward for merit in public life, and that, given the doubt as to the state of man after death, it was the effective assurance of immortality. It therefore became a prime and admired objective of public figures to enshrine themselves, by actually defining their own glory, in the undying memory of posterity. What was more, a man was thought the meaner for not pursuing this quest for glory. . . . Self-magnification thus became a feature of Hellenic higher education, and by no means merely a caricature of its aims.

The honorific monuments throughout the Roman Empire illustrate this yearning for immortal glory.<sup>327</sup>

*"Oh yeah, glory! Didn't the Jews also have something about glory? Glory to God and so on? Oh yes – the apocalyptic part. That was about glory."*

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<sup>323</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p31.

<sup>324</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p40.

<sup>325</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p46.

<sup>326</sup> Malina, Bruce *Insights from Cultural Anthropology* p44.

<sup>327</sup> Jewett, Robert "Paul, Shame, and Honor" in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* ed J. Paul Sampley. Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p554-555. He references Judge, E.A. "The Conflict of Educational Aims in New Testament Thought" in *Journal of Christian Education* 9, 1966 p38-39.



*“Yes, this is important stuff – and also how Jesus fits in, with his death on the shameful cross. There are many blends that we could make! But this is one that you may need to make on your own time, while we focus here on Romans. Good luck!”*

#### **4.5 In Summary**

From what we have found in the previous sections, can we describe the Roman Jewish first century voice? Can we describe a similar Graeco-Roman voice?

We know that neither community was homogeneous and in both there would have been the richer and the poorer, the patron and the client, the free and the slave – but more of the rich in Rome would have been from the Graeco-Roman contingent.

We know that both communities would have been driven by pride and a desire for honour and glory. Both would have found a measure of honour and glory in a good reputation or in wealth. For the Jews, this honour would have also been found in their patriotism and their law and their allegiance to their God. They would have had a good sense of identity and of their value as a people based on their knowledge of their long heritage and of their sense of security in their religious rituals.

For the Graeco-Roman, honour would be found in their allegiance to their family and to their patron and their ability to conform. There would be honour in being able to respond reliably to the continual challenges to their position by their peers. They would also be less sure of their identity and their heritage was much more mixed and unclear than that of the Jews. They would, though, have the pride of being part of the conquering Roman Empire and of having rulers who claimed to be descended from the gods.

The Jews had a strong sense of a pending salvation and the belief that there was somehow a good and victorious future waiting for them. The Graeco-Roman felt more in the hands of fate and those of their capricious leaders. Their only hope was in working their way up the honour ladder or up the patronage ladder to a point where they had enough power to protect themselves and their families. The Jews may have had less access to the patronage system, and so needed to find their security elsewhere, such as in the belief that, at the end of the day, God was on their side.

So the voices are starting to find definition. The input spaces have now been described. The contexts or perspectives for each reading have been shown. We may now begin to work with the intertextual analysis of the text.

## CHAPTER FIVE: SERVANT / SLAVE

### 5.1 Introduction

Having defined our contexts or our conceptual blending spaces, we now begin to look at the text. I have chosen to drive the study with the text drawn from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which is the translation that I read from during the 1970s and 80s. The first few words of Romans 1 are:

***“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ,” Romans 1:1a***

From the outline:

vs 1     \*\* Paul, \*\*  
          [a servant  
                  of Jesus Christ,]

It is straightforward to use the intertextual method on this portion. We mention the name of Paul briefly, but we do not want to do a detailed study on the person of Paul and so move on to the next portion. Here ‘a servant’ will be used as the level one key word and we will examine how the word has been understood in our different contexts. We will not deal with ‘Jesus Christ’ on level one because of the difficulty in limiting the discussion. The phrase, and this is on level two, ‘a servant of Jesus Christ’ will be included and promises to be helpful in answering the question ‘how can diverse people live together well?’ We will use matrixing in three different ways. Firstly, in looking at the Greek meaning of the word used for servant, we will look at other Greek words which, also meaning servant, could have been used instead. Some of these words will come up again when we use matrixing to view other uses of the word servant in the RSV in Romans. Thirdly, we will use matrixing to view other uses of the Greek word for servant in Romans.

These last two uses draw in some significant material and so will have a section of their own after the initial analysis of ‘a servant.’ Throughout the discussion there will be reference to level three of the intertextual method and the question of why the words ‘a servant of Jesus Christ’ are used.

So as we begin working with the text, technically speaking, we should start the study with ‘Paul.’

*“Excuse me. Sorry, I just overheard as I was passing through, perhaps I can help?”*

*It is the Conceptual Blending team again! The lady with the clipboard. I am afraid that there may be interruptions throughout the thesis. I apologise once again, but I do believe that they will be worth the inconveniences. “Yes, what were you saying?”*

*“I’m afraid we couldn’t bring enough blending material to work with the name Paul. Just a little brainstorming amongst the actors indicated that we might need to deal with most of the New Testament. Our stores officer objected. So if you wouldn’t mind just moving on.”*

*“Oh, right. That is not a problem – I was just about to explain that myself. Apart from that, we should be alright for supplies?”*

*The lady with the clipboard glanced down at her notes. “It all looks good. No wait, right here in this verse – we had the same problem with the name Jesus Christ. Our computer system crashed every time we tried to access all the possible intertextual matrix entries. You will not be able to do much in the way of analysis there I am afraid.”*

*“Very well. I did anticipate that. I see that there is a little here about Paul. I will begin with that.”*

We note that ‘Paul’ was the name by which the writer of this letter was known amongst the Gentiles, while Saul was his Jewish name. We do not know whether both were given him by his parents or if one was a nickname acquired later, but we see that his two names indicate his participation in both the Jewish and the Graeco-Roman spheres.<sup>328</sup>

The first key word in the web that we are weaving, then, will be ‘servant’. Paul identifies himself as a servant and we will focus first on the Intertextual method level one meaning which is the significance of the term itself. In the discussion, we will enlarge our focus to include the immediate context (level two) which is the phrase ‘servant of Jesus Christ’. We will extend the context to the rest of the book of Romans and then lastly look at some of the level three implications – why did Paul choose this turn of phrase? It will be necessary to allow the voices to weave in and out, as we hear them speak.

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<sup>328</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p99; also Longenecker, Richard N. *The Epistle to the Romans* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016 p48-49

## 5.2 Graeco-Roman

### 5.2.1 Greek - Παῦλος, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ

In general, we shall use the Greek voice to talk about the language of writing. The so-called Roman voice will speak for the Graeco-Roman culture of the time.

While the RSV translates Greek δοῦλος as servant, it is now usually translated as slave or bondservant.<sup>329</sup> Because we are working with the RSV as our English translation, we need to bear in mind both words, slave and servant.

The difference between the two is that the relationship between slave and master has a measure of permanence, unlike that with a servant who might be employed to work for a certain period only and who is free to leave serving if he or she chooses to do so.

There are other words used in the Greek New Testament which are also translated as servant. We briefly mention some of them as contrast to δοῦλος, because according to our theoretical framework based on Voelz, “We may say, therefore, that *textual events or ideas are matrixed with other textual events or ideas which are in proximity, alike or contrasting in content, or portrayed by the same denotative signs.*”<sup>330</sup>

The first of these is διάκονος.<sup>331</sup> This means one who offers service<sup>332</sup> and has also come to mean one who exercises Christian ministry or service. Thus there is the implication of service, possibly menial, but also of a service that is not bonded and has an element of choice about it. The word ὑπηρέτης<sup>333</sup> is used in a similar sense but also with the idea of an attendant and sometimes in a military or official setting.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Liddell, Henry George and Scott, Robert, *A Greek-English Lexicon; Machine readable text* (Trustees of Tufts University, Oxford) 1940 available online <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/Reference/LSJ.html> p447.

<sup>330</sup> Voelz, James “Multiple Signs” p153. (Italics in the original.)

<sup>331</sup> See Romans 13:4 as an example of usage.

<sup>332</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p398.

<sup>333</sup> See for example John 18:18.

<sup>334</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon*.

The second set of words are those similar in form to παῖς<sup>335</sup> – literally a young person, but used to mean one who serves or a slave.<sup>336</sup> Other words in this family are παιδιον<sup>337</sup>, παιδαριον<sup>338</sup> and παιδισκη<sup>339</sup>. As a young person should be subservient and obedient to an adult, so it should be with this παῖς or servant.

The word οἰκέτης<sup>340</sup> indicates a house servant, somebody part of the domestic living arrangement.<sup>341</sup> This is probably the most similar to δοῦλος in meaning, but δοῦλος has a stronger sense of passivity and dependence on the master.<sup>342</sup> The word θεράπων<sup>343</sup> is usually translated servant<sup>344</sup> and possibly relates to service offered by a slave or a free person.<sup>345</sup> Philo seems to use the words θεράπων, οἰκέτης and δοῦλος interchangeably and both Philo and Josephus preferred the use of δοῦλος to παῖς, using the latter to mean child.<sup>346</sup>

*“This suggests that Paul’s choice of word was simply in line with common usage, but significantly, with the definite sense of forced servitude, rather than a free servant. I would agree with that.”*

*“Um. Excuse me? Who are you?”*

*“I’m Phoebe. I have some privileged insight into this.”*

*“Um. Ok.”*

As we have mentioned in the earlier chapter, slaves formed an integral part of the Roman economy. As such, the δοῦλος must be seen as one of those who

<sup>335</sup> See for example Matthew 8:6.

<sup>336</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1289.

<sup>337</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1287 diminutive of παῖς “A little or young child”, “a young slave, male or female.”

<sup>338</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1286 diminutive of παῖς “A little boy”, “a young slave.”

<sup>339</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1287 diminutive of παῖς “A young girl, maiden”, young female slave, bondmaid.”

<sup>340</sup> See for example Romans 14:4.

<sup>341</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1202.

<sup>342</sup> Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich “δοῦλος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume II* p261.

<sup>343</sup> Only Hebrew 3:5 in the New Testament.

<sup>344</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon*.

<sup>345</sup> Trench, Richard C. *Synonyms of the New Testament* The relevant section is available online at <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/trench/section.cfm?sectionID=9> originally published 1865.

<sup>346</sup> Wright, Benjamin Givens *Praise Israel for Wisdom and Instruction: Essays on Ben Sira and Wisdom, the Letter of Aristeas and the Septuagint* Leiden: Brill, 2008 p 237.

functioned in the economy in that particular manner. So Paul describes himself as a δοῦλος, rather than an οἰκέτης, or a δικάνοϛ or any of the possible terms.

### 5.2.2 Roman – horizontal and vertical ranking

Having looked at the Greek word, we now look at what that word might have meant to the Roman reader or listener.

There would have been little ambiguity in the understanding of the state of a δοῦλος. Roman slaves were necessarily absolutely submitted to their owners.<sup>347</sup> In many cases, they were dependent on them for their basic needs, but as mentioned previously, it was also possible for slaves to achieve a measure of wealth and status in their own right. Here, it would seem, Paul is describing his position by placing himself, as a slave, within the Roman status system. Because we, as readers, are sure that Paul is not a Roman slave, we read with ‘suspended disbelief’ waiting to see where this is leading.

*“I’m sure he wasn’t a slave. Why does he say that he is? I don’t think very much of slaves!”*

*“Uh – you’re not Phoebe? You’re dressed quite similarly though.”*

*“No, I’m Junia. I also just met Phoebe today.”*

*“Ok. Junia – you might not agree with Paul right now. That is what I mean about suspending your disbelief. Let’s go with the flow for the moment and see where it leads?”*

We see that on a horizontal level of society Paul puts himself with the slaves. If he wanted to work within the honour and shame system, he would be challenging and responding to other slaves in order to increase his honour. He is ranking himself with the least. But on a vertical level he is also establishing himself within a *familia*, that is, within a Roman family.<sup>348</sup> Now, he does not claim to be in the Emperor’s family, nor does he claim any other high-ranking Roman official as his *pater familias*. Rather, he says that he is a slave of Jesus Christ. This is what we have been waiting

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<sup>347</sup> Patterson, Orlando *Slavery and Social Death* p32. As Patterson puts it, “The cardinal attribute of the condition of slavery was that the slave was a person subject to dominion.”

<sup>348</sup> Brown, Michael Joseph “Paul’s Use of ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ in Romans 1:1” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 No 4, 723-737, 2001 p727.

for and we are able to ‘believe’ again, as Paul is not claiming to be a Roman slave, but now he has introduced another, possibly, new idea. For those who knew nothing of Jesus except perhaps that he was a dead Judean who had garnered a following in Palestine, but had been discredited, this would be a meaningless claim. But, for those who understood that Christians believed Jesus to have risen from the dead and to be the Son of God, it would have been a subtle challenge to their Emperor, remembering that the Empire Cult is emerging and with it the idea of the Emperor as the son of god.<sup>349</sup>

*“Ooh, yes, I like this. Someone needs to challenge the Emperor and his arrogance!” interjected Junia.*

Paul is making a nicely ambiguous statement – he is a slave in the *familia* of an inconsequential Jew, or he is a slave in the *familia* of a very significant personage. Perhaps the Roman reader (or listener) would be put at ease by the unassuming opening but as his introduction continues, it becomes clear that he wishes to claim the latter relationship.

By calling himself a slave, Paul is also establishing his position with respect to Jesus. It seems rather obvious to us today, but then his hearers needed to know that he was not presenting his own message, but that he was subservient to Jesus. He spoke on Jesus’s authority and not on his own. They also needed to know that he was not on some sort of opportunistic mission; his labelling himself as a slave indicated an absolute commitment to the one he served. He was no fly-by-night, but had a lifetime commitment.<sup>350</sup>

Michael Joseph Brown notes that Paul’s introductions at the start of his epistles do not usually include the aspect of slave or servant. Only here in Romans and in the letter to the Philippians does it occur and interestingly enough, before the aspect of apostle which he uses more often.<sup>351</sup> It could be that in the Roman contexts it was well understood that slaves of Caesar were considered part of the household of Caesar, so Paul’s calling himself a slave of Christ, part of the

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<sup>349</sup> Rock, Ian E. *Paul's Letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism: An Ideological Analysis of the Exordium (Romans 1:1-17)* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012 p159.

<sup>350</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p100.

<sup>351</sup> Brown, Michael Joseph “ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ” p723.



household of the Son of God, strikes a chord, whereas in letters to other communities this would not be as relevant.<sup>352</sup>

*“What is important for any discussion of diversity and community-building is the way that Paul slots into the Roman system from the word go. At the very outset of his letter he shows willing to engage with the Gentile Romans where we are at by using terms of reference with which we are very familiar,” said Junia.*

*“Or to phrase it differently, in the words of Ian E. Rock, ‘That Paul writes a letter to the imperial centre of the Empire, and in the exordium (and indeed throughout the letter) uses terms that describe and perpetuate the identity of the Roman Empire and Roman Imperial ideology, is an indication that there are certain ideological presuppositions that the letter is addressing.’<sup>353</sup>”*

*“But, is his use of the word slave intended to show humility?” asked Junia.*

*“Remember that we are well-aware that Paul was not a kitchen slave or a labourer and so he is not necessarily identifying himself as one of the lowest of the low or denigrating himself in that sense. On the other hand, he is clearly negating any thought that he himself is a Roman lord or master.”*

It is worth reminding ourselves that the word δούλος and the concept of a slave itself did not have any racial or ethnic connotations. Slavery in modern times has so often been based on racial discrimination that we can easily subconsciously think of the Jews, during the time of the Roman Empire, as a slave race, which was not the case at all.<sup>354</sup>

While it was the privilege of the conqueror to take members of the conquered nation into slavery, race was not a defining feature of Roman slavery.

We have already entered into the level three intertextual analysis, asking why Paul described himself in this way. We are able to weave into the web some understanding of Paul’s attitude to slavery suggested by N.T. Wright.

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<sup>352</sup> Brown, Michael Joseph “ΔΟΥΛΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ” p725.

<sup>353</sup> Rock, Ian *The Letter to the Romans* p108.

<sup>354</sup> Richard, Carl J. “Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery: Review” in *International Journal of Classical Tradition* Fall 2005, 320-321 p320.

Wright contends that when Paul became a Christian he had to fundamentally rewrite his worldview. He encourages non-oppressive co-operation in his description of part of this worldview:

The new symbolic praxis which stood at the heart of his renewed worldview was *the unity of the Messiah's people*. In letter after letter he spells it out in more detail, but here in Philemon we see it up close: in this case, the unity of the slave and free. Paul puts everything he has into making this unity a reality.<sup>355</sup>

Slavery was naturally an important part of the worldview of that time and place. It was inconceivable to any of them that a society should exist without slavery and so they took it for granted as we take everyday things for granted – Wright uses the example of electricity. Jewett points out that even slaves did not see any alternative to the shape of Graeco-Roman culture with its reliance on slavery - rebellions were aimed at switching the roles of slave and master, rather than eliminating slavery.<sup>356</sup>

The only ancient communities that managed to live without them, so far as we can tell, were self-chosen, quasi-monastic groups who lived far away from other habitations. For most people, slavery was simply part of the *praxis* of their worldview; for some – not least for the slaves themselves! – it could also feature largely in the *story*, especially if, as was true for many slaves, they had once been free and had become slaves through being on the wrong side in a war, or even a business deal.<sup>357</sup>

Any slave might thus have had at heart of his or her story the question of how they could perhaps gain their freedom.

*Once I was free*, he may have thought, *Now I'm a slave, but one day I may be free*. Then comes the question, the answer to 'What's the solution?', or 'How can we get out of the mess?': I could save up money and buy my freedom; or I could just run away and chance my luck...<sup>358</sup>

*"Are you saying that Paul may not have liked slavery?" asked Junia. It was becoming clear that she had some connection with the Romans. "I am having to do some suspending of unbelief to grapple with this!"*

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<sup>355</sup> Wright, N.T. *Fresh Perspective* p30.

<sup>356</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p52.

<sup>357</sup> Wright, N.T. *Fresh Perspective* p32.

<sup>358</sup> Wright, N.T. *Fresh Perspective* p32-33.

We could wish that Paul had been more explicit about his stand on slavery. Was he in favour of it? Against it? Indifferent? Why didn't he condemn it or work for its abolition? <sup>359</sup> Perhaps he was simply pragmatic in believing that the danger involved in resisting slavery was too large.

*Junia is not satisfied. "This raises the question, why did Paul use such dehumanising imagery in his letter to the Romans? Why did he legitimise the institution of slavery by choosing it as a metaphor? Is it possible to find non-oppressive readings, or is Paul's Christianity inherently dominance based?"*

Perhaps Paul was investing in an early version of the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and he uses slavery as a code which may be recoded and used as a tool for liberation. It may have been an entry point into the conversation on oppression, weaving the abstract and the concrete into a web, ultimately leading to transformative action.<sup>360</sup>

### 5.3 Hebrew

#### 5.3.1 Old Testament – slaves in Egypt, slaves of God

*"Hi – I'm Miriam. Junia called me to come and I thought I would introduce myself upfront. She said you seemed to be getting a little irritated with the interruptions."*  
*"Hello, Miriam. Actually Junia had some good points, so please feel free to interrupt. I guess you are also some sort of expert?"*  
*"Well, not really an expert. Let's just say I have first-hand knowledge of some things."*

While the Jews lived in Rome, under Roman government, in the same ambit as any other Roman, they had a different history. This is not an Old Testament thesis, so we will only touch lightly on this voice.

*"I could probably help," said Miriam.*  
*"Thanks Miriam. Please do contribute. We do need to be brief, however."*

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<sup>359</sup> Wright, N.T. *Fresh Perspective* p50,54.

<sup>360</sup> Freire, Paulo *A Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition* (trans. Myra Bergman Ramos) New York: Continuum, 2005 p105, 114.

Talk of slavery is not complete without mentioning the enslavement of the Hebrew people in Egypt as recorded in the book of Exodus. While some scholars<sup>361</sup> do not see echoes of Exodus in the New Testament N.T. Wright believes it is a pervasive theme in early Christian thought.<sup>362</sup>

The 'new-exodus' language is clear: from slavery to sonship, by means of God's 'redemption', resulting in this people being the 'heir' of the 'inheritance'. Paul develops this more fully in Romans 6-8, where the narrative of the exodus stands, arguably, behind the whole exposition.<sup>363</sup>

Paul's self-identification as a slave could have been problematic for the Jewish hearer in that he claimed the 'wrong end' of the exodus process. At this point he puts himself amongst the slaves, rather than amongst the redeemed.

*"But the Jews did know about being slaves! You know that many of us Jews living in Rome were there because our ancestors were enslaved when Pompey invaded Israel in 63 B.C.E.— although many most probably became Roman citizens after being emancipated."<sup>364</sup>*

According to Jewett, a very large number of those living in Rome were slaves. One commentator suggests that that one third were slaves, one third were freed slaves and only one third had always been free, although another suggests that 20 percent of the population was slaves.<sup>365</sup> Thus it could be also that many Jewish hearers, who may have once been slaves or even were still slaves, would have found comfort in having Paul identify himself with them by calling himself a slave.<sup>366</sup>

For those listening with a less literal ear, they may well have heard an echo of the prophets in Paul's introduction.

*"Yes, I was thinking about that," said Miriam.*

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<sup>361</sup> For example Nürnberger, Klaus *Theology of the Biblical Witness: An Evolutionary Approach* Münster :LIT Verlag, 2002 p188.

<sup>362</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* p1105.

<sup>363</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* p1070.

<sup>364</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p55.

<sup>365</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p52.

<sup>366</sup> Oakes, Peter *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letter At Ground Level* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009 p131. Oakes listens to the voices of slaves and suggests how they might have been comforted.

Paul's expression may well be patterned on "slave of Yahweh" used in the Old Testament of prophets (e.g. Amos 3:7, Jeremiah 7:25) and of believers in general (e.g. Nehemiah 1:6, Psalm 19:11.)<sup>367</sup> Richard N. Longenecker explains Paul's use of the phrase in this way:

It is a prophetic self-identification, which would probably not have been understood by Gentile Christians generally and therefore does not appear in most of Paul's other NT letters for circumstantial reasons. But it would certainly have been understood and appreciated by the Christians at Rome, both Jews and Gentiles ethnically, who were steeped in OT teachings.<sup>368</sup>

Jewett prefers to think that Paul uses the phrase strictly in the sense described in the previous section, where we heard the Roman voice, and that he saw himself in a priestly rather than prophetic role.<sup>369</sup> However, it is entirely compatible with the rest of Paul's introduction and the motive of this thesis to believe that Paul used the phrase intentionally to appeal to both Jewish and Roman listeners. He is very conscious that he has a diverse audience and is well aware of the Roman and Jewish identities. It would suit him very well if Jewish hearers saw him in the place of an Amos or a Moses – a slave of God just as those described in the Old Testament. As Ian E. Rock says:

More likely, rather than one position to the exclusion of the other, it could be that Paul intends his audience to see both positions, given that his appeal to holy scripture assumes a previous knowledge on their part.<sup>370</sup>

#### **5.4 My Voice – tea girls and garden boys?**

In this section, we listen to my own thoughts – my own voice made explicit.

Today these words of verse 1 have become so familiar to me that I struggle to comprehend fully the submission that Paul may have referred to by calling himself a slave. It is easier for me to see the way he uses the term to include himself in the family of God than to grasp that there may have been an element of demeaning himself.

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<sup>367</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p100.

<sup>368</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p52.

<sup>369</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p100.

<sup>370</sup> Rock, Ian E. *Paul's Letter to the Romans* p110.

I remember growing up white during apartheid. When I was a very young child, black people were servants. Rather, Servants. It was in a way a definition of who and why they were. Black people walking in the white suburbs were there because they were servants. White people were not servants. Or Servants. To me the word servant had nothing to do with service, but was rather a class description. I am certain that in the same way, many black people grew up with the idea that they were by nature servants and that this is was simply the way life was meant to be.

*"I had the same experience. Many of my childhood friends were brought up by these servants," interposed Carol.*

Just as Paul, in the RSV, did not talk about slaves, nor did we. The word servant somehow hides the indignity of servitude, while the word slave forces it upon us. Black people were never slaves! (Or so said the oppressing masters.) They had freedom and were paid. Never mind that they could not choose where to live or where to send their children to school. Never mind that many employment opportunities were closed to them. Never mind that they were implicitly the servant class.

An indication of how much this word servant matters is how the job title has changed since apartheid was abolished. Servants became maids and gardeners, then domestic workers or domestics and then more cautiously helpers and patronisingly (I think) landscape engineers.

*"I am always embarrassed when having to describe such people by their job description and am afraid of offending," said Carol.*

For others, this is a means of attack and so Julius Malema, leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters<sup>371</sup>, takes delight in deriding black people who work in partnership with white people as 'tea girls' and 'garden boys'.<sup>372</sup>

*"Would Paul have described himself as Jesus' garden boy?" wondered Carol.*

This would not have been an unreasonable way to understand his introduction, if one did not have an understanding of the Roman slavery system. It is

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<sup>371</sup> A South African political party usually known as the EFF.

<sup>372</sup> See for example BBC News, *South Africa's Julius Malema in His Own Words* online <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15678254> 2012.

an interpretation that removes dignity. The idea that Jesus should desire us to be subjected to such humiliation as a matter of course is hard to believe. Yet, this is what being a servant meant to those who were black during the years of oppression.

My thoughts today take a different direction when looking at the slavery passages, because of the thoughts this thesis has made me think! I am conscious of Paul not tackling slavery as a sin because of its infiltration throughout contemporary culture. It was not that he approved it, but perhaps he saw it as an inalienable aspect of contemporary culture, perhaps one to be endured until the time was right for change.

*“Or perhaps he was using it as an entry point to help people redefine themselves in a liberating way – I hadn’t thought of that before,” added Carol.*

We continually struggle to hold in balance what is right and what is convenient. The Serenity Prayer, often attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, but predating him, encapsulates these thoughts. “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”<sup>373</sup>

*“Amen!”*

## 5.5 African

### 5.5.1 Black Consciousness – own the oppression, God is with us

*“Black Consciousness provides the next voice to which we listen,” said a young lady named Thando.*

*“American Black Theology as the ancestor of South African Black Consciousness also provides input to this,” added Thembi.*

*“Hello. Are you two twins?”*

*“No,” they laughed, “just good friends!”*

The way that the Bible deals with slavery, and the things that letters supposedly written by Paul, in particular, have to say have for a long time been a

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<sup>373</sup> Hudson, Trevor *The Serenity Prayer: A Simple Prayer to Enrich Your Life* Cape Town: Struik, 2005 p xiv.

bone of contention. While this verse in Romans 1 is comparatively mild, the injunctions to slaves to obey their masters have been problematic.<sup>374</sup> The American story of how Howard Thurman's grandmother refused to hear the writings of Paul read has often been told, but here we draw it from the writings of Mukti Barton.

When Christian slave masters could not have oppressed fellow human beings without first silencing their own conscience, and for that, there were texts in St Paul's epistles that could be easily manipulated. They found justification in the Bible, particularly in Pauline texts, for the subjugation of Black slaves. 'One ex-slave witnessed to the frequency with which the White preacher preached from St Paul's epistles, "you must obey your masters and be good servants". That is the greater part of the sermon, when they preach to the colored folks'. Howard Thurman remembered his grandmother explaining to him, During the days of slavery . . . the master's minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves . . . Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three or four times a year he used as a his text: 'Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters . . . as unto Christ' . . . I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible.'<sup>375</sup>

Thurman also describes a university principal's strong reaction to his Christian belief (again referred to by Barton):

Your forefathers were taken from the western coast of Africa as slaves . . . The men who bought the slaves were Christians. Christian ministers, quoting the Christian apostle Paul, gave the sanction of religion to the system of slavery . . . sir, I think you are a traitor to all the darker peoples of the earth. I am wondering what you, an intelligent man, can say in defence of your position.<sup>376</sup>

*"This idea of self-identifying as a slave is difficult to accept in my context. Slavery goes with oppression and oppressive masters. Is Paul implying that Jesus is an oppressive master?" asked Thembi.*

Rather than rejecting the appellation, some proponents of Black Consciousness have embraced it. South African activist Steve Biko writes:

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<sup>374</sup> Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22.

<sup>375</sup> Thurman, Howard *Jesus and the Disinherited* Richmond: Friends United 1981, p30-31 quoted by Barton, Mukti "Was Paul an arch-advocate of slavery or a liberator?" in *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity* (ed. Anthony Reddie) Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010 p48.

<sup>376</sup> Thurman, Howard *Jesus and the Disinherited* p14-15 quoted by Mukti Barton "Was Paul an arch-advocate" p48.



All in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of a man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.

This is the first truth, bitter as it may seem, that we have to acknowledge before we can start on any programme designed to change the status quo. It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realise that the only vehicle for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity.<sup>377</sup>

Thus it was essential for black people to own that they were in effect slaves. This was the first step to their liberation. Without acknowledgement, there was no motivation for change. Another key characteristic of Black Consciousness that helped people make sense of things, after a fashion, was the idea that God was with them in their suffering:

The vicarious power of this suffering and death of the oppressed in the struggle is derived from the presence of God with the oppressed in their struggle; of actualising their gift of being created in the image of God; of being made into acting subjects, creators that fashion history. God participates in their struggle which is his struggle. In other words, the history of Jesus goes on in the struggle of the oppressed who rise to affirm themselves. He is present there among them even though submerged. The event of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth sustains the struggling community of the oppressed during their protracted hanging on the cross.<sup>378</sup>

*"I see that there are thus two ideas here that we can apply back to Paul's words. The one is that our liberation can only begin when we recognise and accept that we are slaves. The other is that we know that in our status as slaves, the least, the marginalised, God suffers and struggles alongside us. We hope for his sustaining and his deliverance of us. I like this," smiled Thembi.*

*"Yes. This relates to what you said earlier about the work of Paulo Freire. The idea of slavery is recoded to move us to a place of hope. It makes sense," said Thando.*

#### 5.5.2 Traditional – to khonza and the house slave

*In order to understand the African voice it is necessary to learn something of the history behind the voice. Unfortunately for me, as the writer of this study, I have over the years found that it is very difficult to bridge my world and the indigenous African*

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<sup>377</sup> Biko, Steve *I Write What I Like* London: Heinemann, 1987 p29.

<sup>378</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso A. *The Crucified* p41.

*world. The African traditions are oral rather than written and I have found that I am not able to comprehend fully when an African person tries to include me in an understanding of their historical culture. I find that much of what is written is 'tainted' by western thought and it is very difficult to gain a true understanding of the origins. "Please don't leave out this aspect of the African voice!" exclaimed Thando. "That would present the danger of allowing western thought to dominate even as you are trying to draw in new perspectives. Please soldier on. We know that you are neither an indigenous African nor an anthropologist."*

*"Definitely! There is richness in the traditions that needs to speak into this thesis," agreed Thembi.*

*"Thanks! I will do my best."*

Sean Stilwell tells us that slavery was common amongst the African nations. Slaves were used as soldiers, skilled and unskilled labour and for political purposes.<sup>379</sup> He noted that the Zulu nation under Shaka did not use slaves.

How can we explain the use of slaves by some states and not by others? The states that avoided the use of slaves as political or military agents were effectively controlled by a powerful institutionally legitimate monarch – like Shaka – who had few elite competitors for power, which were highly incorporative and expansionistic, and were able to mobilise and effectively control large freeborn populations, obviating the need for slaves.<sup>380</sup>

While Stilwell does not particularly identify slavery under Shaka, we find references to types of servitude elsewhere. The first is found in accounts of the refugees at the time of the events commonly known as the Mfecane.<sup>381</sup> William Shaw describes finding a number of these refugees being incorporated into another tribe:

On my earliest visit to the Chief Hintsa, I saw a bivouac which had been formed of a party of these refugees, including men and women, but very few children, - these having mostly perished in their wanderings. Their condition and appearance reminded me forcibly of the assumed garb and the lying

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<sup>379</sup> Stilwell, Sean *Slavery and Slaving in African History* London: Cambridge University Press, 2014 p89-123.

<sup>380</sup> Stilwell, Sean *Slavery and Slaving* p122.

<sup>381</sup> The nature and the cause/s of the events of this period are uncertain. See discussion in Cobbing, Julian "The Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo" in *Journal of African History* 29, 2 487-519, 1988 and also Hamilton, Carolyn (ed.) *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History* Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand Press, 1995.

words of the Gibeonites, by which they “beguiled” Joshua. In this case, however, all was real, and no mistake in the matter. They had “come from a very far country.” They had “old [skin] garments upon them; some of them old shoes [sandals] and clouted upon their feet;” and they did say, in the most abject terms and tones, “We are your servants!” They were in effect told by the Chief, “Ye shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water.” I saw several families of them who were on this occasion distributed to various Kaffir headmen, with whom they at once proceeded to the kraals where they were to reside.<sup>382</sup>

*“What do you think, Thembi?” asked Thando. “Do you think we can trust the missionary reports?”*

*“I don’t know. But this is just a story – I can’t think of anything to say it could not have happened, can you?”*

*“No, I guess not. You are right – just a story – a little window with distorting glass that allows us a glimpse of the past. I hope that the time comes when we can see more clearly!”*

Another manner in which people could serve was to *khonza*<sup>383</sup> (also sometimes spelt *konza*). John Iliffe in describing the structure of Zulu society under Shaka mentions the various elite levels and then:

To *konza*, to serve by choice a greater man in return for protection and favour, was the core of rank in this dangerous world, creating a duty that took priority even over duty to the king.<sup>384</sup>

Michael Mahoney expands on this, describing how Zulu people were able to move around from chief to chief, changing allegiances:

Even before Shaka’s time, people “khonza’d” whenever they changed their allegiance from one chief to another. People spoke of khonza’ing not only chiefs within present-day KwaZulu-Natal province, but even those beyond,

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<sup>382</sup> Shaw, William *The Story of My Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa* Wesleyan Mission House, 1872 p271. A similar idea is expressed with reference to the Ndebele people in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. *The Ndebele Nation: Reflections of Hegemony, Memory and Historiography* Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2009 p 61. The author specifically references Kinsmen, Margaret “Hungry Wolves: The Impact of Violence on Rolong life, 1823-1836” in *The Mfecane Aftermath* p380.

<sup>383</sup> I am using the word as used in my sources. The infinitive form would be *ukukhonza* rather than ‘to *khonza*’ if I was to be grammatically correct.

<sup>384</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* London: Cambridge University Press, 2005 p143.

such as Pondos and even Sothos. People could also khonza one chief, then switch their allegiances and khonza another, or even a third.<sup>385</sup>

This idea of *ukukhonza* is interesting when the isiXhosa text for Romans 1:1a is taken into account. It reads, “*UPawulos, umkhonzi kaYesu Kristu.*” The word *umkhonzi* is the personal noun form of *ukukhonza*. Literally, Paul, the *umkhonzi* of Jesus Christ. With this meaning, the idea of being a slave is not denigrating at all. Someone who chose to *khonza* came to offer his service and then receive protection. He would give himself into the power of the chief and could rise to become a person of rank and significance – an elite fighter. When I asked an isiXhosa speaking minister if the word *umkhonzi* had any specific meaning he replied that it just meant worshipper<sup>386</sup> – and it seems a pity that a phrase of such potency has become so tame.

The isiZulu Bible does not use the word *umkhonzi* although it is to be found in a Zulu dictionary.<sup>387</sup> The word used here is *inceku*. This is translated as an ‘official in the chief’s kraal’, ‘steward’ or ‘attendant’.<sup>388</sup> This does allow some sense of an elite servant in the word ‘official’. Without doing a proper etymological study and questioning the translators of the Nguni Bibles, it is not possible to know whether the use of the word *umkhonzi* in the isiXhosa Bible is simply coincidental. Nonetheless, it suggests a broader meaning to Paul’s word ‘servant’ and adds an interesting strand to our web.

The arrival of the settlers also brought about the arrival of slaves from around Africa. In the beginning at least, the local indigenous population was not taken into slavery, but rather slaves were imported from Madagascar, Mozambique, Angola and elsewhere.<sup>389</sup> These were all people of colour and ultimately their descendants

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<sup>385</sup> Mahoney, Michael R. *The Other Zulus: The Spread of Zulu Ethnicity in Colonial South Africa* Durham: Duke University Press, 2012 p25.

<sup>386</sup> IsiXhosa dictionaries indicate that the verb root *-khonza* means worship. For example online dictionaries <http://www.gononda.com/xhosa/> and <http://www.speakeasyxhosa.co.za/dictionary/general/category/>

<sup>387</sup> Doke, C.M. et al (compilers) *English and Zulu Dictionary* Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1982. Here it is said to mean ‘worshipper.’

<sup>388</sup> Doke, C.M. et al *English and Zulu Dictionary*.

<sup>389</sup> Giliomee, Hermann *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011 p12.

were part of the oppressed during the time of apartheid. Allan Boesak describes how they were treated very similarly to William Thurman's grandmother.

This example comes from a report of the Dutch pastor M.C. Vos, who migrated to South Africa at the end of the eighteenth century. In his report he tells how he persuaded farmers to permit their slaves to be instructed in the gospel. Keep in mind that he was neither ignorant nor blind to reality: "It is natural that your slaves will not become worse but, rather, better through education. Let me try to convince you of this. You have slaves, I have noticed, who originally came from a variety of lands. Put yourself in the place of one of them for a few minutes and think in the following way: I am a poor slave, but I was not born in this status. I was taken from my dear parents, my loving wife or husband...Now I am a slave. I must do everything that is commanded me even to the point of doing very undesirable work. If I do not do this willingly, then I am beaten severely. "Suppose for a few minutes," the pastor continued in his conversation with the farmer, "that this was the situation in which *you* found yourself. Tell me, if you were to be in that situation, would you have the desire to do your work?"<sup>390</sup>

The story carries on with the farmer agreeing that he would not be at all willing and would seek to escape the situation. The pastor then persuades him that with a simple Biblical education the slave would learn to know his place and be happy in it:

When they begin to understand this a bit, the despondent and grieving thoughts will change. Then they will begin to think: "if that is the way things are, then I shall be content with my lot and I shall attempt to do my work obediently and joyfully."

The farmer cried out, "Why weren't we told these things before? I must confess my ignorance. From now on I shall never dissuade anyone from educating his slaves."<sup>391</sup>

*"That is disgusting!" cried out Thando. "Clearly this is a case where the Bible has been used oppressively. Was Paul right to call himself a slave? Or is he legitimising slavery? Was he the perpetuator of inequality?"*

*"Suspend disbelief for a while. Let's see what is still to come!"*

### 5.5.3 Desmond Tutu – docile zombies and the God who hears

Under apartheid, Desmond Tutu was under no illusion that black people were treated any better than slaves. He describes the effect of the Bantu Education policy:

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<sup>390</sup> Boesak, Allan *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation, and the Calvinist Tradition* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2015 p14.

<sup>391</sup> Boesak, Allan *Black and Reformed* p15.

The intention of bantu education was to teach ‘*Bantu*’ children just enough English and Afrikaans so that they could understand instructions given by their white masters or mistresses. It was education for perpetual servanthood, indeed serfdom. It was designed to spawn unthinking, uncritical, docile zombies who would be the proverbial drawers of water and hewers of wood for their white overlords.<sup>392</sup>

However, Desmond Tutu expressed hope after hope, throughout the apartheid period, and he believed that God would give black South Africans their own Exodus experience;

Do you remember when God spoke to Moses? He said, ‘I have seen the suffering of my people. I have heard their cry. I know their suffering and am come down to deliver them.’ Our God is a God who knows. Our God is a God who sees. Our God is a God who hears. Our God is a God who comes down to deliver.<sup>393</sup>

## 5.6 Afrikaner

### 5.6.1 The people – slave owners in a brutal system

Hermann Giliomee in his book on the Afrikaner people devotes several pages to slavery in the Cape and these notes are adapted from his work.<sup>394</sup>

*“I’m not sure that everyone agrees with Giliomee.<sup>395</sup>” Another young women seemed to have entered the thesis.*

*“Hello. No, I am sure you are right. However his work is quite comprehensive which allows us to gather background information. We will keep our minds open! By the way, what is your name?”*

*“Oh, sorry! I am Elmarie.”*

*“Hi Elmarie. Let’s continue then.”*

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<sup>392</sup> Tutu, Desmond & Allen, John *The Essential Desmond Tutu* Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1997 p34-35.

<sup>393</sup> Tutu & Allen *The Essential Desmond Tutu* p12.

<sup>394</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p45-50.

<sup>395</sup> See for example Furlong, Patrick “Apartheid, Afrikaner Nationalism and the Radical Right: Historical Revisionism in Hermann Giliomee’s *The Afrikaners*” in *South African Historical Journal* 49 (Nov. 2003) 207-222.

As mentioned in the previous section, slaves were brought from other countries into the Cape. They performed only the most menial of tasks, which meant the dividing line between them and the free people was very distinct.

Baron van Imhoff remarked in 1743 that having 'imported slaves every common or ordinary European becomes a gentleman and prefers to be served rather than serve.' Even poorer burghers who could not own slaves enjoyed the spin-offs of being part of the dominant class.<sup>396</sup>

Cape society consisted of free burghers, foreign slaves, indigenous Khoisan servants, white *knechten* (servants) and free black people. These were informally divided by rank, with colour playing a part in the status divisions.<sup>397</sup> Giliomee reports on the scale of slave ownership:

One of the most pronounced features of the western Cape as a slave society was the remarkably wide spread of slave-ownership. In 1750 half of the male burghers were slave-owners. In Cape Town, two-thirds of the burghers held slaves by the end of the century and 70 percent of farmers in Stellenbosch and Drakenstein owned at least one slave. Small slave-owners predominated; by the mid-eighteenth century 57 percent had only one to five slaves and a further 22 per cent, six to ten.<sup>398</sup>

Slaves were involved in many aspects of the burghers' lives. They looked after children, did the shopping and cooked meals and accompanied their owners when they went out. Slaves made burghers' lives easier, but they also made them feel more insecure. Slaves outnumbered the burghers by three to one in the 1760s and there was the constant fear of an uprising. The close daily contact meant there was a familiarity between slave and owner which mitigated against the desire of the slave-owners to remain exclusive and apart.

It also meant that slaves could over-step the mark and become over-familiar:

but one thing was certain: the government would punish a slave who lifted a hand against a master swiftly and mercilessly. The eighteenth century was a time when horrific forms of punishment were meted out in Europe, often to precede executions... At the Cape the burghers also received tough sentences and in a handful of notable cases were severely punished for murdering slaves or Khoisan.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p45.

<sup>397</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p45.

<sup>398</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p45.

<sup>399</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p46.

Although under law slaves were considered property, they were also considered human beings and entitled to certain rights. Often, this was for fear of the slaves rebelling if they were abused sufficiently badly, but it did mean that the law provided them some protection.

An unusual feature of the Cape slave society was that owners offered so little in the way of reward to help reconcile slaves to their condition. They were seldom offered education, they did not have ranks allowing for promotion and it was extremely costly for an owner to free a slave, as they were still responsible for the person if they could not find adequate employment.

The ideology of paternalism had to bear the brunt of the burden in reconciling slaves to their fate. Owners propagated the myth that slaves were members of the household and even part of the extended family.<sup>400</sup>

The masters stood in the place of a father to the slaves. They provided discipline, but also fed them properly, looked after them and provided treatment when they were sick. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, it became the practice that slaves would join the family for prayer as well. This system allowed the owners to convince themselves that their behaviour as slave-owners was essentially benevolent and the slaves were better for being enslaved and completely happy with the state of affairs. Sometimes this paternal system did result in close bonds – especially between woman owners and woman slaves. Children played together while young but these bonds were broken when they grew up and the slave children remained slaves while the owning class children became the masters and mistresses. Slave women were particularly betrayed by the paternalistic relationship when the intimacy meant them having to endure the sexual advances of their masters. As Giliomee says, “No slave system is ever mild and it would be a mistake to consider Cape slavery anything but brutal.”<sup>401</sup> Slavery was abolished in the Cape in the 1830s with the final Emancipation Day being 1 December 1838.<sup>402</sup>

We see in the Cape slave society many similarities to the Graeco-Roman one, but also differences. Perhaps the biggest difference is that Roman slaves could be

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<sup>400</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p48.

<sup>401</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p50.

<sup>402</sup> Giliomee *The Afrikaners* p115.



highly educated people with responsible duties, whereas the Cape slaves were kept ignorant and in menial roles.

*“The paternal system in the Cape manages to come across as petty and sordid,” said Elmarie, “while the slaves in the families gained honour from their associations.”*

*“Yes. This may be due to the fear that the Cape slave owners had of their slaves. Reading Paul’s words in this context must have been very different.”*

*“If Paul was a slave and Jesus the slave-owner, the implication might be that while Jesus nurtured Paul, he also would have behaved brutally at times,” mused Elmarie.*

*“Some people do see God as brutal and so this for them might not be inconsistent. Paul’s listeners must have also wondered if Paul served a brutal master!”*

*“Agreed. I think it was important for Paul to clarify the nature of his God in his letter.”*

#### 5.6.2 D.F. Malan – poor whites

Almost 100 years after slavery was abolished in the Cape, D.F. Malan was contemplating labour issues of a different sort. With his general lack of interest in the affairs of black people, he became aware of the financial difficulties of a section of the white population who came to be called ‘poor whites’. Lindie Koorts quotes Malan, from about 1916, as he recounts a scene:

Anyone who is familiar with some of the larger parts of our country will also know the sight that so often can be met on our dusty roads – the dilapidated half-tent wagon with the tatters fluttering in the wind, and harnessed to it a team of six or eight emaciated, tottering donkeys. After a few years’ experience, one does not even need to enquire to know that the white driver with his listless posture and the neglected woman with her dull eyes are probably not members of a church, and are either completely unable to read and write, or can only do so poorly, and that the half dozen uncombed and unwashed children have never seen a church from the inside – let alone a school ... They are willing to do all kinds of work. None of which they can do well. Thus, they move from farm to farm, complaining bitterly about anyone who gave them work and accommodation on his farm, while the employer, in turn, complains bitterly about their unreliability, dishonesty and stubbornness, and assures you emphatically that he would rather work with coloured people a hundred times over.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p152-153.

While many more well-to-do Afrikaners despaired of such people, Malan felt it was important that the *volk* stay united and insisted that people such as these should work and have a place in the economy. His belief that black people were fundamentally less able meant that he was sure that as long as white people kept trying to work, black people would not be able to compete.<sup>404</sup>

It was Malan's ongoing concern with the 'poor whites' and the realisation that black people were substantially more able than he anticipated which resulted in early attempts of the National Party to propose apartheid style legislation in 1939.<sup>405</sup> It is interesting to note Malan's extreme distaste for the debased condition these white people came to - perhaps in some ways worse than slaves, but also his total disregard for the condition of black people except that they should not be taking the jobs of 'his' people. The Afrikaner would not be made a slave! We are again reminded that this notion of slavery is different to the Roman notion. Graeco-Roman slaves could be highly educated and people of substance – although there were often subject to worse abuse and hopelessness than described in these sections.

### 5.6.3 Dutch Calvinism – distinctions imposed by God

*"Religion has always been important for us as Afrikaners," said Elmarie.*

*"We will look, from time to time, at the form of Christian belief called Dutch Calvinism and how it impacted or may have impacted on Afrikaner belief and behaviour. This gives us another strand to weave into the web and more possibilities for our blends."*

The Dutch Calvinist roots of the Afrikaner religion have always played a role in the people's thinking.<sup>406</sup> In Holland in the late 1830s, the Calvinist religion led to the idea of Christian Nationalism. Groen van Prinsterer and his followers came to believe that in order to keep the people's faith pure and undefiled their children needed to be educated separately from other children.<sup>407</sup> After van Prinsterer's death Abraham Kuyper took up the mantle. He became prime minister of Holland in 1901 and Dutch

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<sup>404</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p153-155.

<sup>405</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p326-327.

<sup>406</sup> For a proposal of how Calvinism came to be influential please see Hexham, Irving "Dutch Calvinism and the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism" in *African Affairs* Vol 79, No. 315 (Apr. 1980) 195-208.

<sup>407</sup> Hexham, Irving "Dutch Calvinism" p205.

Calvinist separation extended to other areas throughout society.<sup>408</sup> In South Africa, this influence led to the establishment of the National Party in 1913. “They consistently argued for the separation of the Afrikaner people from their neighbours – both black and white.”<sup>409</sup> They were concerned for the protection of their Dutch Calvinist heritage from other cultures.

*“How did this affect the Afrikaner attitude to slavery?” asked Elmarie.*

*“Let’s have a look at what Calvin himself had to say on the subject.”*

Biographer William Stacey Johnson claims that John Calvin was opposed to slavery:

To his credit, Calvin was an opponent of slavery. He lived in a day of empire and colonisation that brought with it a trafficking in human slaves. He argued that human beings were created free and equal, and that slavery, which is a result of sin, turns this freedom on its head. The New Testament, according to Calvin, opposes slavery, since a relationship with Christ abolishes distinctions of rank and privilege.<sup>410</sup>

This is borne out by his assertion that the slavery law in Leviticus was put there by God, not because he decreed slavery good and right, but in order to make accommodation for a primitive people.<sup>411</sup>

However, in a lecture by Abraham Kuyper we see the subtlety in his interpretation of Calvin’s thinking that allows the proponent of apartheid and the slave owner to have his way. Kuyper begins his argument along the same lines as Johnson and then has this:

Hence we cannot recognise any distinction among men, save such as has been imposed by God Himself, in that He gave one authority over the other, or enriched one with more talents than the other, in order that the man of more talents should serve the man with less, and in him serve his God.<sup>412</sup>

Kuyper continues, arguing that this shows Calvin a believer in equality. However, these same thoughts are easily interpreted as God ordaining one race or

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<sup>408</sup> Hexham, Irving “Dutch Calvinism” p206.

<sup>409</sup> Hexham, Irving “Dutch Calvinism” p207.

<sup>410</sup> Johnson, William Stacey *John Calvin, Reformer for the 21st Century* Westminster: John Knox Press, 2009 p116.

<sup>411</sup> Partee, Charles *The Theology of John Calvin* Westminster: John Knox Press, 2008 p156.

<sup>412</sup> Kuyper Abraham (1898) *Lectures on Calvinism* New York: Cosimo, 2009 p27.

set of people to be superior to another – even if it is all done in the name of love and service.

*“I’m afraid that this describes the attitude of many Afrikaner people since then in South African history,” sighed Elmarie.*

#### 5.6.4 Racism in the world context – Ham and the curse

*Thembi and Thando came in to join Elmarie.*

*“The Afrikaner was not by any means alone in his way of thinking about black people and about slavery,” said Thando.*

From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when Europeans began to encounter black people the belief that these were the descendants of Ham took hold.<sup>413</sup> The story of Genesis 7-9 is that because Ham saw his father drunk and naked and did not cover him up, Noah cursed Ham and relegated him and his offspring to a life of slavery and servitude. To some people, the behaviour of Ham – drunken and disorderly – mirrored that seen in the black slave population. In their minds, this made black slaves the heirs of Ham’s curse.<sup>414</sup>

Haynes argues:

During the heyday of slavery in America, a racial understanding of Genesis 9-11 was so much part of the cultural common sense that defensive arguments were no longer required. The significance of Noah’s curse in American slavery debates cannot be appreciated until we grasp the way Genesis 9 provided the implied racial context that other biblical arguments lacked. Even if we assume that Christian advocates of slavery knew the Bible lacked any explicit justification for the “enslavement of Africans, and only Africans, in particular,” this only confirms the central role of Noah’s curse in the proslavery argument. The curse becomes indispensable precisely because, according to culturally sanctioned views of the Bible, history, and society, it could be regarded as providing the justification for black enslavement missing from other biblical texts.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Haynes, Stephen R. *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 p35.

<sup>414</sup> Haynes *Noah’s Curse* p12.

<sup>415</sup> Haynes *Noah’s Curse* p12.

If this voice was to be true to itself when reading Romans 1, it would need to wonder whether Paul was under a curse in that he has found himself to be a servant or a slave.

*“Was his situation a matter of choice – or was he a spiritual descendant of Ham? That is an interesting way of looking at it!” exclaimed Thembi.*

*“Not that every servant needs to be descended from Ham, but to be honest and open we must ask the question. Does Paul’s servanthood mean that he was perhaps black?” asked Thando.*

*“Do you mean in a literal or a figurative sense? I suppose either. I am doing some suspending of disbelief to get my mind around this,” joined in Elmarie.*

However, this supremacist voice does not speak so much to itself from the text, as from the text to others. This voice condemns and consigns others to a state not of their own choosing.

*“This is a voice that we, the oppressed, could not help but hear, when we read Bible verses that should have brought life but became words of condemnation,” commented Thembi.*

### **5.7 Servant and slave in the greater Romans context – all are slaves, even the king**

*“Hi – I’m Carol. We need to use the English words to build into the intertextual matrix!”*

*“We shall! We touch briefly on some further ideas, but will avoid getting too tangled in the web being woven.”*

The English word servant appears another four times in the RSV translation of Romans. These are 13:4 (twice), 14:4 and 15:8. In none of these cases does the word translate the Greek δοῦλος.

*“However, it is useful to look at these references as this is the English context that South Africans would have had in the 1970s and 80s,” said Carol.*

### 5.7.1 Romans 13:4 - δῖάκ νος

In Romans 13:4, the word δῖάκ νος is used twice. The servant in this verse is the civil authority who is referred to as the servant of God.

Reading this at a level one or two (literal and immediate context) could have the effect of raising the level of the servant in the reader's eyes. If the king is God's servant and Paul is God's servant, then perhaps Paul is more important than we first thought. The level three reading of this verse forces us to stop and take note. Why did Paul put this here? It is somewhat frustrating to insist on reading the word servant here as equivalent to the word 'slave' in Romans 1:1, but if we are to be true to our method we need to do so.

*"Did Paul put this here because he wanted to put himself on a level with the king? I don't think so," opined Carol.*

*"The preceding verses suggest that Paul is having to rescue a situation where people are threatening disobedience to the civil authorities."*

*"So perhaps he is raising the king to his level (he is a servant of God, as Paul is), with the aim of persuading people to cooperate with the government of the time," said Carol.*

*"At the same time he is reducing the king to the level of a worker – a subtle or not so subtle reminder that his power is not absolute," added Thembi.*

#### **South African Context**

The context of this verse was very significant in the South African context and so we very briefly allow the voice to speak – just in two quotes describing what could be the two principal positions.

*"Romans 13:1-7 has always been problematic when the authorities are seen as corrupt," said Thando.*

*"South Africa under apartheid was no exception. The period caused deep theological reflection and debate," agreed Elmarie.*

*"The Conceptual Blending team have not left much in the way of notes," said Thembi.*

*"They haven't. Let us summarise then."*

Firstly, we describe the view of the apartheid government (as written by a Black Consciousness scholar):

State theology depicts the Afrikaner government justifying the state's endemic violence, racism and capitalism with Christian theology. Such a perverted theology supposedly gets its authority from scripture. It tells the oppressed in South Africa to automatically obey the apartheid government (Romans 13:1-7.)<sup>416</sup>

Gabriel Setiloane describes the view of the oppressed, along with some of the angst, and comes up with a way forward:

These Christians who suffer tyranny and oppression (and the facts of life in South Africa find them all of one colour and even of one ethnic group origin), who go to bed in the agony and anguish of trying to live a decent, respectable life in the face of persistently unrelenting, stubborn and destructive regime which undermines their faith in God as the source of righteousness, soon discover that other passages of Scripture speak more relevantly to their predicament than Romans 13 or 1 Peter. There is, as we have already seen, Daniel 11:31, so important to the early church that it had to be recorded in the mouth of Jesus in Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14. In any case Biblical scholarship points out that both Romans 13 and 1 Peter were written before the early church had experienced the heat of the Roman persecution. The authors could afford to theorise and speculate about a situation they had not yet faced.<sup>417</sup>

#### 5.7.2 Romans 15:8 - δῖάκ νος

In this verse, the δῖάκ νος is Jesus and the passage tells that he became a servant to the circumcised.

#### 5.7.3 Romans 14:4 – οἰκέτης

This word, while translated along with δοῦλος and δῖάκ νος as servant, more strictly describes a servant with a menial function. The οἰκέτης is a household servant who does chores around the house.

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<sup>416</sup> Hopkins, Dwight N. *Black Theology USA and South Africa: Politics, Culture, and Liberation* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005 p97.

<sup>417</sup> Setiloane, Gabriel "On Which Side Is God?" in *When Prayer Makes News* (ed. Allan Boesak & Charles Villa Vicencio) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986 p134.

#### 5.7.4 Romans 15:16 – λειτουργός

We include this for completeness. The Greek λειτουργός means servant,<sup>418</sup> but is translated ‘minister’ in the RSV. We cannot arrive at this word directly from Romans 1:1 through either the Greek or the RSV English translation. However, the word and the context provide a useful understanding of Paul’s role and function. Although the common usage of the word was much the same as δοῦλος, it adds a hint of a priestly dimension to his servanthood.<sup>419</sup> There may be a connection with the idea of public benefaction through the associated verb λειτουργέω.<sup>420</sup>

#### 5.7.5 Romans 6 - δοῦλος

We look now at other occurrences of δοῦλος and its variations in Romans. These have been translated ‘slave’ in the RSV, and so are brought into our web by linking the Greek words, rather than the English words as we did earlier. The recurrence of δοῦλος in chapter 6 is important as it shows a progression of thought within Romans. Here Paul is answering the question – should we continue to sin? (vs 1). He answers ‘no’ and explains by essentially saying that we are slaves either to sin or to God. “...so that ... we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (vs 6). Verses 16-22 each use the word δοῦλος (or the appropriate grammatical variation of it.) These verses are legitimate children of Romans 1:1 using the intertextual method.

We note that there are words in this portion that need to be noticed for their close relation to the word slave. The first of these is dominion, found in vs 9 and vs 14. Another is reign, found in vs 12 and ‘make you obey’ also in vs 12. These are all words of power and dominance, words that would be used over a slave.

*“In another category is the word yield which is used over and over in this chapter. This word gives agency to the weaker party,” said Carol thoughtfully.*

We also note the words that are grouped with sin and those that are grouped against. With: sin, death, greater and greater iniquity. Against: obedience, righteousness, life, sanctification, God. These verses will come up again in chapter

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<sup>418</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p1036.

<sup>419</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p906.

<sup>420</sup> Strathmann, H. and Meyer, R. “λειτουργέω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume IV* p216. This was a technical term for the donations and benefits expected to be provided to the public by those individuals with a certain income. The noun, however, has not been seen to be used in this way.



nine where they are woven into the web from another starting point. For now, we note the point that Paul is making is that there are many ways of being slaves, but that we have the opportunity to choose our master.

*“In the terms that we suggested earlier from the work of Paulo Freire,” said Thando, “Paul has taken the code word of slave, decoded it and is now recoding it to say that we are slaves, yes, but we have the power to choose the household to which we are joined.”*

*“I like that,” said Carol and Elmarie and Thembi nodded agreement.*

*“I heard that in the old days a family could desert their tribe and find a new one,<sup>421</sup> is that true?” asked Carol.*

*“I don’t know, but if the chief of your tribe is forcing you into actions you do not like, or if he is rewarding you with punishment, it makes perfect sense to turn your allegiance elsewhere,” said Thembi.*

*“In the struggle era though, the black person could not just remove themselves from the power of the white,” said Thando.*

*“The oppressive regime created conditions close to slavery and people were not able, nor willing, to exchange one master for another,” added Thembi.*

*“Yet these words in Romans 6 would offer the promise that sin would not ultimately be triumphant and that righteousness would overcome.”*

It is interesting to look at these verses through the eyes of those who see slavery as a result of sin – probably many of us need to temporarily suspend our disbelief here. Obviously these verses are metaphorical, yet they raise the interesting question of whether there is any alternative to slavery.

*“So many questions!” exclaimed Carol. “As human beings are we doomed to be either slaves to sin or slaves to God? Is there not another way? Are we perhaps cursed, like Ham, to perpetual slavery because of Adam’s sin? What could the alternative have been? Might we have been completely free and independent if*

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<sup>421</sup> Shaw, William *The Story of My Mission* p440-441.

*Adam and Eve had paid the price of early obedience when in the Garden of Eden? Is there any way out of our predicament – or is slavery to God the best that can be?”*

#### 5.7.6 Romans 8 – δουλεία

These questions are answered as we weave the word δουλεία, slavery or bondage,<sup>422</sup> into the web. We find this used in Romans 8:15 where Paul continues the thread of opposites seen in chapter 6. In chapter 6, he spoke of being slaves to sin or slaves to God, but here he describes the choice as being between the Spirit and the flesh. He leads on to believers becoming sons of God and his explanation reaches a climax in verse 15 where he proclaims that believers have not received a spirit of slavery, but one of sonship.<sup>423</sup> While the opposite of being a slave to sin is being a slave to God, the opposite is also being a son of God, with all the privilege that entails. Jewett speaks of verse 14 in this way:

This is the first reference in Romans to the υἱοὶ Θεοῦ (“sons of God”), an expression with broad resonance in the Greco-Roman and Jewish environments. Heroes and rulers were celebrated as individual sons of God, and this formulation had a particular resonance in the Roman environment because of the civic cult.<sup>424</sup>

Jewett also draws in the Jewish concept by reminding us that “according to the ethos of ancient Israel, ... Yahweh was thought to have adopted the people of Israel as his kinfolk” and that Paul was using the widely understood concept of adoption to express this understanding.<sup>425</sup>

*“It seems that Paul has taken the slave code and by decoding moved through the option of choosing one’s master to where in fact one may be in the household of God as a son,” said Elmarie.*

*“But it is significant that he identifies himself as a slave at the beginning,” said Thembi. “The rest follows.”*

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<sup>422</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* p446.

<sup>423</sup> Wright calls Romans 8:12-25 the classic ‘exodus’-passage. Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013 p1338.

<sup>424</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p496.

<sup>425</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p498.

## 5.8 An interlude of thought

They filed into the room as if they had been waiting outside, but as it was they had merely all arrived at the same time. The lighting was dim. It was a chapel of sorts, but in the small congregational area in front of the altar a table was set with notepads and pens. There were elements for the celebration of Holy Communion or the Eucharist on the altar table.

They took their seats around the table. One spoke up, "Am I in the right place for the Conceptual Blending workshop?"

The others nodded. But clearly none of them were leading the workshop. They sat and waited for a moment.

"I'm Elmarie," offered the one who had spoken earlier. "I come from Johannesburg. My home language is Afrikaans so I hope that you will forgive me if I make mistakes in my English. My particular field of study is Paul's letter to the Romans."

A few nodded and smiled.

"I'm Carol," said her neighbour. "Also from Johannesburg and also studying Romans!"

"We are Thembi and Thando", said the next along. "We live in Soweto which is part of Johannesburg. We speak English most of the time, but in Soweto we get exposed to many South African languages. We are working together on a paper on Romans for the University of South Africa. Are we all studying Romans?" Thembi looked meaningfully at the three people sitting on the other side of the table.

"I think we must be. But I am not from Johannesburg. My name is Miriam and I have been living in Rome and speak Aramaic at home and Greek when I am out. Before today I had never heard of English, but somehow I seem able to speak it and understand it quite well."

"Yes, me too. I am Phoebe and I also live in Rome, but I speak Greek all the time. I am trying to learn Latin, but I'm struggling! I wonder how this English comes so easily? We were so excited when Paul's letter arrived for us. I hope that we are going to discuss it together."

The last one seated at the table looked at her fellows and greeted them. "I am Junia. I also speak Greek and Latin and am a Roman citizen. This looks as though it will be a fascinating workshop. Phoebe and Miriam, I have seen you at some of the prayer meetings. I will be glad to get to know you better. And to discover where Johannesburg is," she said with a smile to the four sitting on the other side of the table.

*"All women", said a hidden observer. "I wonder why?"*

*"This thesis could have been very male dominated. Even patriarchal in fact. It was necessary to make a correction, to bring balance," said the author.*

"Παῦλος, δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ," said Phoebe.

"The first words of the letter," breathed Miriam.

"Hard words," said Thando. "Slavery is never right."

"I was a slave," said Miriam. "I was lucky though, I was freed with my parents when I was a teenager. But Paul understands me."

"My mother was a domestic worker. She was treated like a slave, even though slavery is illegal in South Africa. I never want to be in her position and I will do everything to keep my children from it," said Thembi.

"Paul was wrong to use those words," put in Thando. "He should never have seemed to condone slavery."

"No, Thando. I've been there. I have seen it. I understand what he means when he says that slavery to sin is like being a real slave. I won't submit to it. I am a Christian and now only Jesus can tell me what to do," said Thembi.

"I have my own slave," said Junia slowly. "It doesn't feel good right now."

"My mom could have been your mother's 'madam', Thembi. You are right Junia. It doesn't feel good," said Elmarie.

*"The mind is not a Cyclops, it has more than one I,"<sup>426</sup> said the author.*

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<sup>426</sup> Fauconnier and Turner *Conceptual Blending* p6, 11-15. This discussion is based on these pages, but the concepts are drawn from throughout the book.

*“What are you talking about?”, asked the hidden observer. “If we are heading off into Greek mythology then we are going to be wandering very far afield.”*

*“What I said is a sort of a riddle coined by two promoters of Conceptual Blending. It helps if you see it written down because then you would know that the ‘I’ is the capital letter and not the word e-y-e.”*

*“Curiouser and Curiouser. Where does Conceptual Blending come into Paul’s letter to the Romans anyway?”*

*“Well, it’s what this gathering is all about. It’s why these women are here today.”*

*“You are being distinctly mysterious. Would you please elucidate? Who is this cyclops and how does he happen to have more than one ‘I’?”*

*The author laughed. “I do like to confuse you. You should see your face! The first ‘I’ is for identity. The riddle shows off the complexities of identity very well. ‘The mind is not a cyclops.’ That is an expression of identity. Alright, it is a negation of identity, but the principle holds. A cyclops is a mythological creature. It is supposed to be a giant with one enormous eye in the centre of the forehead. A very strange creature indeed. The mind is also something very strange. It is that which thinks and decides and which perhaps defines the human individual’s personality. You would think that you could not connect the two. And yet we are able to build a construction that identifies the mind with this mythological giant.”*

*“That takes quite a bit of imagination. What sort of person came up with this?” grumbled the observer.*

*“Spot on! That is also one of the ‘Is’. Imagination. But let’s finish identity first. Listen to the riddle again, ‘The mind is not a cyclops, it has more than one I’. There is another place in the riddle that uses the concept of identity. That is in relating ‘I’ to ‘eye’ (e-y-e). The only connection the two have to each other, I’m sure you would say is that they are homophones – they sound the same. But see the cleverness of the author’s imagination: perhaps you would say that you, or your mind, only have one identity, or one ‘I’ as in the personal pronoun. That would make you a cyclops!*

*“Eish. That is pushing it a bit. But I see what you mean. I am one ‘I’, I have one e-y-e, I am a cyclops. That seems a bit hard on we human beings.”*

*“Perhaps, but that is only an element of what the riddle is saying. What is an eye (e-y-e) used for?”*

*“To see, obviously.”*

*“Exactly. The mind does not only have one eye to see with, but three!”*

*“Now you’ve lost me.”*

*“The mind uses three things to make sense of reality and to communicate that sense – identity, imagination and integration. Three ‘Is’ for seeing. I’ve mentioned identity and imagination. By the way, do you see what an imaginative way this is of communicating the concept? Isn’t it awesome? The last ‘I’ is integration. This is making constructions and building and binding things together. Relating the mind to the cyclops is an integration, as is relating the I to the e-y-e. Putting the whole thought together is a further integration.”*

*“Wow, that is clever. But I need a moment to process all of this!”*

The conversation in the meeting room had taken a new direction.

“Who was Paul, really?”

“He was a Jew. A good Jew.”

“No, you can’t claim him. He rejected Judaism and embraced Gentile ways. If he wasn’t a typical Roman, I would call him at least a good Greek.”

“No ways did he reject his Jewish heritage. He stayed a Jew. Just because he didn’t force his culture on others doesn’t mean he didn’t value and observe it himself.”

“Let’s look at his introduction of himself and see what he says.”

“A servant.”

“Of Jesus Christ.”

“Called to be an apostle.”

“Set apart for the gospel of God.”

“I am Paul!”

The others were silent as they stared at Elmarie. What did she mean? Did she have delusions of grandeur? Did she identify with Paul in some way? If so, was this a good thing or a bad thing? Who was Elmarie, really?

“Just as Paul was sent to the Gentiles, so the Afrikaner was sent to the African nations. My people were the bringers of the light.”

“\$%\*,” Thando used a word often considered inappropriate for Christians, and also for this thesis. “Your people were not Paul. They were not the Jews. And my people were not godless and ignorant. It would be more likely for me to be Paul! I identify with those who are considered outside of salvation and are the lost. I plead with you – be reconciled!”

Miriam was bewildered. “Neither of you can be Paul!”

Simultaneously Phoebe said with excitement, “You are both Paul!”

“Huh?”

“Paul was a Jew.”

“And a Greek, a Roman.”

“One of the amaXhosa, and a Motswana.”

“An Afrikaner, an English person.”

“But ultimately he did not find his identity in any of these. He was first and foremost a servant of Jesus Christ.”

“We are not Paul because he was a person with exceptional gifts.”

“And an exceptional calling.”

“He had authority beyond that of the regular Christian.”

“But we are Paul when we are truly servants of God.”

“When we find our identity in that without rejecting our heritage or that of others.”

“We are Paul when we go where we are sent and teach others that they are equal and valuable in the kingdom of heaven.”

*The author smiled. “I think our little group is starting to play with ideas of identity and integration.”*

*“And I suppose you would say they are using their imaginations. Hmm. Your three Is could be quite interesting.”*

## **5.9 Critical Analysis**

At this point in the exercise, it could be left to the reader to draw conclusions. The reader will have seen things in the Blend which resonated – or conflicted - with their own experience, or perhaps their reading of Scripture. The reader may feel the necessity of additions or omissions or variations on the blend. If the reader chooses, he or she may find meaning or an invitation to act – to transformational praxis. Or the reader may be wrestling with the necessity to hold on to a moment where disbelief (or belief) is suspended.

### **5.9.1 The blend**

Setting up the blend was done by holding the two goals set for Conceptual Blending in mind – to achieve human scale, and to answer the posed question, ‘How can diverse people live together well?’ In order to achieve human scale I decided to put all of the action in one room and in one short time period. On the diversity side, I decided to people the action with characters from both contexts. As mentioned in the text, I used women in an attempt to begin to balance out the overwhelmingly dominant voice of male scholars.

I wanted to keep it simple, so I let the action be simply meeting around the text under discussion. I let the conversation develop in my imagination, trying to achieve the ‘organic’ development hoped for from Conceptual Blending, but I kept the focus on diversity in mind.

Having this group talk about slavery reminded us what an emotional topic it is. The anger felt by black African people in South Africa at being treated like slaves is powerful. Similarly, the regret by some of those who were involved as oppressors is deeply felt. We can rationalise Paul’s calling himself a slave and focus on issues of allegiance and status, but at the end of the day, real people feel emotion about slavery and loss of freedom and oppression.



### 5.9.2 The text

Paul must have known that some people would feel that emotion as he called himself a slave. Jews particularly who had been enslaved through military operations may have read this as South African black people did. Some would have felt comfort in Paul's identifying with their position. Others may well have felt anger and believed that Paul was a sell-out in that he embraced the colonial system. Yet others may have despised him for lowering himself to be a slave.

Perhaps it is for these reasons that Paul moves quickly in Romans 6 to explain that we are all slaves one way or another – what remains for us is to choose our master, whether that be sin or Jesus. This may also explain why he validates his claim to be who he is by reference to the prophets and Holy Scriptures, in the next verse, which were particularly Jewish elements. Paul may have realised that this description of himself as a slave would be less emotive to Roman readers and tried to reconcile the Jewish reader by early reference to specifically Jewish elements. It may be that for both of them he was choosing a symbol to deconstruct.

As we seek to understand Paul's choice of the word 'slave', we notice that the blend brought to the surface the demeaning aspect of slavery and challenged the practice of slave owning and of dominating others. In the intertextual reading we saw that this was not likely to have been the way these words would have been read when Paul wrote, as the nature of the slave society was generally unquestioned.

There are two significant aspects to 'slave' which emerge and it may seem strange that they are opposites. One aspect is that of strength and the other weakness. We see strength in that Paul describes himself as if he is in the *familia* of a powerful person. This is echoed by the *umkhonzi* in Zulu history and by the prophet as the slave of Yahweh.

Weakness is seen in that a slave was dominated in Roman society which has an echo in the slave-owning of the Afrikaner, the subjugation of the Jewish people in Egypt and the oppression of black people by white people in apartheid South Africa.

Importantly, we see that Paul's use of slave implies the movement from weak to strong as he shows that while people are all slaves, they need not be slaves to the harsh master, sin, but may choose to belong to Jesus. In this he uses 'slave' as a code to embrace as it allows people to move their understanding. This is echoed

strongly in the Black Consciousness idea that liberation starts with the realisation of oppression. Paul identifies himself as being amongst the slaves, in much the same way as Black Consciousness sees Jesus as being on the side of the oppressed.

Paul's use of the word slave therefore speaks to us, here and now, of the possibility of moving from our position of weakness in the world to one of strength and indicates that he has already made that transition.

Now we move on to the next words.

## CHAPTER SIX: CALLED/ APOSTLE/ APART

### 6.1 Introduction

#### ***“called to be an apostle, set apart” Romans 1:1b,c***

Paul continues to identify himself in verse 1, now using the key words ‘called’, ‘apostle’ and ‘set apart’. These are three words or phrases that express a sense of being singled out, perhaps almost a sense of privilege. In this section, we will look at these words individually and in the idea of being chosen that they convey.

From the outline:

[called  
to be an apostle,  
set apart]

The way that this will be dealt with according to the intertextual method is look at ‘called’, ‘apostle’ and ‘set apart’ each on level one. We will examine how each of them is understood in each context. On level two, we will look at how the words are used together and how this affects our understanding. The level three meaning will be used to try to understand what Paul was saying by using these words.

We will do explicit matrixing with the word ‘called’ which draws in some other parts of Romans. There are three other uses of the word ‘apostle’ in the letter to the Romans, but these ideas are drawn into the web elsewhere and so will not be matrixed in here. We will also do matrixing with the level three idea of ‘privilege’ where we unpack other places in Romans where Paul may speak of ‘specialness.’ This, as mentioned before, does become interpretive and therefore to some extent subjective.

### 6.2 Graeco-Roman

#### 6.2.1 Greek - κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀφωρισμένος – called and sent

These words follow one another directly in the Greek: κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀφωρισμένος.

The word κλητός is commonly translated as called, although alternatives are invited, welcomed or invoked.<sup>427</sup> The translation ‘called to be an apostle’ seems to be inexact and removes some of the impact of κλητός,<sup>428</sup> as if it is relevant only as the process towards being an apostle. As a substantive adjective it has emphasis of its own, “the one called”,<sup>429</sup> or in the absence of the article “a one called”, and the word deserves to be examined on its own merits,<sup>430</sup> in line with the first level of our technique for intertextual analysis which examines the text word by word.

The phrase “a called one” raises the suggestion of a company of called, amongst whom Paul is one. Paul is a κλητός, a called person.

This κλητός is followed directly by the noun ἀπόστολος, which may be translated messenger, ambassador or envoy and is often used to mean a messenger from God, with the sense of God’s authority being significant<sup>431</sup> - almost as if it was God himself.<sup>432</sup> Originally, the word was used for the sending of boats<sup>433</sup> and the sense in which it is now understood seems to be a Christian appropriation. This may have come about through the one place where it is used in the Septuagint<sup>434</sup> where it translates the Hebrew *Shaliach* with ἀπὸστολος. In rabbinic Judaism this *Shaliach* came to encompass what we mean by the word apostle, thus “the Gk. gives us only the form of the NT concept; the ‘shaliach’ of later Judaism provides the content.”<sup>435</sup>

*“So, we see Paul as both called and a messenger or ambassador. In English we are accustomed to ‘called’ being a verb and ‘apostle’ being a noun. It seems that we should be able to somehow put them in the same form,” said Carol.*

*“Yes, I think so too,” said Phoebe. “Please will you do that for us?”*

<sup>427</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon*.

<sup>428</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p101.

<sup>429</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p53.

<sup>430</sup> Calhoun, Robert Matthew *Paul’s Definition of the Gospel in Romans 1* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011 p88.

<sup>431</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon*.

<sup>432</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p101.

<sup>433</sup> Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich “ἀπόστολος” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume I* p407-408.

<sup>434</sup> 1 Kings 14:6 where Ahijah uses it of himself.

<sup>435</sup> Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich “ἀπόστολος” p421.

As κλητός relates to the verb καλέω (I call),<sup>436</sup> ἀπὸ στολος relates to the verb ἀπὸ στέλλω (I send),<sup>437</sup> we can just as well relate them both to verbs and Paul is thus saying that he is ‘a called one’ and ‘a sent one’. Perhaps another way of putting it would be ‘Paul, the one who is both called and sent’. Jewett prefers “an apostle called.”<sup>438</sup>

These are followed by the perfect passive participle form ὁ ὠρισμένος which can be translated ‘having been set apart’.<sup>439</sup> The perfect tense indicating an event in the past that continues to have implications at the time that Paul was writing.

*“Thus he is called and sent, having been set apart in the past, with clearly a view to the future. I like that,” said Phoebe thoughtfully.*

The word ἀφορίζω is used to translate the Hebrew *parus* (to separate) in the Septuagint. This Hebrew word may also be the source of the Greek word Φαρισαῖος which is Pharisee in English.<sup>440</sup> Paul may thus, consciously or unconsciously, have chosen this particular term for set apart because of his being a Pharisee. Jewett sees this more as accidental than intentional, but it is interesting nonetheless and might perhaps be a “Freudian slip.”<sup>441</sup>

Just for completeness, we see that the sentence ends εἰς εὐαγγέλιον Θεοῦ – into (or towards or for) the gospel of God. Without beginning to look at the word gospel prematurely, we just note the direction of Paul’s being set apart – into the gospel of God. Thus his being set apart is not necessarily away from people, but rather towards the gospel.

## 6.2.2 Roman – priests, philosophers and god-emperors

Greek literature only shows any sense of being called by God where Paul had influence<sup>442</sup> and the notion of an apostle was unknown. “It is quite consistent in the Gk. world that no essential role, and perhaps no role of any kind, is played by legal

<sup>436</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* καλέω

<sup>437</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* ἀπὸ στέλλω.

<sup>438</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p 101.

<sup>439</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* ἀφορίζω.

<sup>440</sup> Schmidt, Karl Ludwig “ὀρίζω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume V* p454.

<sup>441</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p102.

<sup>442</sup> Schmidt, Karl Ludwig “καλέω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume III* p495.

elements in the dealings of the gods with humanity through human intermediaries.”<sup>443</sup>

The idea of the gods of the hearth and the fields was an idea of localised gods – these particular gods were included in the family<sup>444</sup> and there was no clear sense of who had chosen whom, or how the relationship came to be. The *pater familias* was seen as the family priest to these gods.<sup>445</sup>

*“I think that the more public gods, however, had special priests to serve them and mediate worship, didn’t they?” asked Junia.*

*“Yes, but there was no particular standardisation of the priests of different gods or cults.”*

“There were instead many different types of priesthood at Rome, involving large numbers of different religious officials, attached to different deities and cults, with different duties, obligations and privileges.”<sup>446</sup> Because of the integration of the religious and political spheres in Rome, priests were usually political appointments. They were mostly from the elite – in particular the senate. The priestly function was part-time and the appointments were made for life. These priests were co-opted or elected according to the policy of the time, rather than ‘called’.<sup>447</sup> In the Roman provinces, imperial priests were often closely associated with benefactions which represented the generosity of the emperor and gave them a superior status.<sup>448</sup> They played a significant role in cementing Roman rule.<sup>449</sup>

Some other religious functionaries were augurs.

*“Ugh, I don’t like augurs. Entrails! Sometimes they smell,” said Junia as an aside.*

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<sup>443</sup> Rengstorff, Karl Heinrich “ἀπό τολος” p412-413.

<sup>444</sup> Dunstan, William E. *Ancient Rome* p31.

<sup>445</sup> Bromiley, Geoffrey W. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 4* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995 p112.

<sup>446</sup> Beard, Mary et al *Religions of Rome: Volume 2, A Sourcebook* London: Cambridge University Press, 1998 p194.

<sup>447</sup> Beard, Mary *Religions of Rome* p197; Davies, Mark Everson and Swain, Hilary *Aspects of Roman History 82BC-AD14: A Source-based Approach* London: Routledge, 2010 p316.

<sup>448</sup> See for example Kahl, Brigitte *Galatians Re-imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010 p195 and Donfried, Karl P. “The Imperial Cults of Thessalonica and Political Conflict in 1 Thessalonians” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley) Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1997 p218.

<sup>449</sup> Kahl, Brigitte *Galatians Re-imagined* p187.

Their duty was to interpret unusual or unexpected events as signs from the gods. The most dramatic omens or portents were associated with emperors and other famous people.<sup>450</sup>

Philosophy was another feature of Roman life that filled the space often filled by religion in other cultures.

Ancient religion was tolerant and non-sectarian. In this it was unlike ancient philosophy. The adherents of Epicurean and Stoic philosophy fought long and acrimonious feuds, as one can see by reading Lucretius. The reason for this difference between religion and philosophy is that the philosophers maintained various factual propositions about the world – that it was made of “breath” or atoms, that it was finite or infinite, and so on – whereas ancient religions only presupposed the existence of forces capable of being persuaded by prayer and sacrifice. Since Roman religion offered no dogmas about the universe, there was nothing for people to contradict or to argue about. Philosophers, on the other hand, had elaborate systems which they defended to the last detail with grotesque ingenuity.<sup>451</sup>

These philosophers may possibly have been deemed to be sent by the gods. “For example, Epictetus describes Cynic philosophers as persons who must know that they are messengers sent by Zeus to humans.”<sup>452</sup> In contrast to being sent by God, the philosopher’s role was the difficult task of defending or witnessing to his principles.<sup>453</sup>

In the Roman world, certain people were set apart in a special way. The emperor cult was based on the notion of the emperor as a god, this ‘godship’ being assigned after death, a process known as apotheosis.

This is a common Greek notion – an immortal (i.e., one who is destined to enjoy everlasting fame), because of his/her service to humanity, receives veneration upon death. One finds this pattern, for example, in both the cult legends of heroes (e.g., Heracles) and in the panegyrics of deified rulers and emperors.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>450</sup> Aldrete, Gregory S. *Daily Life in the Roman City: Rome, Pompeii and Ostia* Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2004 p145.

<sup>451</sup> Ogilvie, R.M. *The Romans And Their Gods* Cape Town: Random House 2011. Google e-book, no page number.

<sup>452</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p101.

<sup>453</sup> Schmidt, Karl Ludwig “καλέω” p493.

<sup>454</sup> Heen, Eric “Phil 2:6-11 and resistance to Local Timocratic Rule” in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (ed. Richard A. Horsley) London: Bloomsbury, 2004 p 141.

Several Roman emperors received the privilege of apotheosis, and in particular, one of these was Claudius, the father of Nero who was emperor at the time of the writing of Romans.

In the West, there were three distinct terms that were used to define divine beings. *Deus* was the term applied to one of the traditional gods, Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, Venus, et al. On the other hand the term *divus* was used to designate a human being who was apotheosized posthumously; so that Caesar became *divus* Caesar, August became *divus* Augustus, and Claudius became *divus* Claudius on their apotheosis. Yet still, a living emperor who was the son of an apotheosized *divus* became *divus filius*. In the East however, such distinctions did not take place. Both *deus* and *divus* were rendered *theos* and *divi filius* rendered *huios theou*.<sup>455</sup>

*“And so Nero would have been known as son of god. As Nero has been set apart by his relationship to his exalted father, Paul is set apart by his being chosen by God as his representative and for particular duties. Yes, this makes sense to me,” said Junia, nodding.*

## 6.3 Hebrew

### 6.3.1 Old Testament – prophet and priest

Recent scholarship on the Hebrew word *nabi*, which is translated ‘prophet’ in English, is relevant here. In the past, the word has been believed to be derived from an active form of the verb ‘to call’ and thus believed to mean ‘one who invokes a god’. Now many scholars believe that it derives from the passive form and should be translated ‘one who is called by a god.’<sup>456</sup>

This allows us to translate Paul’s words where he says he is a called one in yet another way, by replacing ‘called one’ with prophet – Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, a prophet, an apostle. What we are doing by intentionally replacing words is allowing the emergence of new resonances. It is difficult to know whether readers of the time would have been able to make the connection, from Paul’s words with the Hebrew *nabi*, but surely, the link to the calling of the prophets was apparent.

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<sup>455</sup> Rock, Ian *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* p159.

<sup>456</sup> Huehnergard, John “ON THE ETYMOLOGY AND MEANING OF HEBREW NĀBĪ” in *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies / מחקרים בידיעת הארץ: ישראל-ארץ* 88-93, כו, 1999 p88, also La Sor, William Sanford et al *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996 p222.



*“Gosh, yes. Nabi rather than Shaliach. There might be something there. I need to think on that a little!” said Miriam. “But there is more to being called isn’t there?”*

The idea of being called by God is a common one in the Old Testament and we think of the calls of Abraham, Moses, Saul, David and the prophets among others. For the Jewish readers this word contains meaning gained through centuries of history. We suggest two ways of reading the meaning of this word which are not necessarily completely distinct from each other. The first is the reasons for describing calls:

The descriptions of the call have at least two roles in the prophetic books. First, they validate the authority of the prophet as distinct from that glibly claimed by the false prophets. Second, they contain summaries of the main themes of the prophets’ ministries.<sup>457</sup>

This is consistent with Paul’s use. He is affirming his authority – he is the slave of Jesus Christ and he is called. He is also describing his area of activity – he is set apart for the gospel.

Secondly, Paul R. House in *Old Testament Theology* suggests that the call of Moses was the iconic call on which other call stories were based in the canon of scripture. He lists possible features of God’s call as divine confrontation, introductory word, commission, objection, reassurance, and sign.<sup>458</sup> These features can be seen in Paul’s conversion and commissioning experiences as recorded in Acts. It is thus consistent with Paul placing himself in the line of the called starting with Moses.

*“Or even with Abraham, who came chronologically before, although the narrative of his call was recorded later!” Miriam was clearly pleased to see these links with her own history being drawn out.*

*“Paul as ‘a called one’ is thus putting himself into the company of the called from the time of the Old Testament. He may even be placing himself on a level with the Old Testament prophets as a nabi, a called one. Awesome!” summarised Carol.*

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<sup>457</sup> La Sor, William *Old Testament Survey* p221.

<sup>458</sup> House, Paul R. *Old Testament Theology* Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1998 p96.

Paul was not only called, but he was also sent – an apostle. As most of those called in the Old Testament were prophets, so also were most of those who were sent as Walter Kaiser Jr describes:

While the Lord sends a variety of agents to accomplish all sorts of purposes, the most frequent association with God's sending is the office of prophet. Moses and his brother Aaron top this list. Repeatedly Moses is described as sent by the Lord . . . Just as God sends his word (Is 55:1) and it accomplished that for which it was sent, so God sent a whole line of prophets who would accomplish what God intended.<sup>459</sup>

The word ἀπ' στέλλω is used frequently in the Septuagint. The example that Jewett suggests is the well-known story in Isaiah 6:8 where God asks whom he should send and who would go. Isaiah answers that God should send him.<sup>460</sup> Again we see the link that Paul has with the prophets through the concept of being sent. It is interesting to note, however, that the later rabbinic tradition did not see a prophet as a *Shaliach*. Rengstorf sees this as a limitation of the identification of ἀ' όστολος with *Shaliach*.<sup>461</sup>

*"Ah! I was right when I said this earlier! Thank you," smiled Miriam.*

The idea of being set apart began with Israel being a nation set apart for God.<sup>462</sup> The verb from which ἀ' ωρισμένος is derived occurs in the Septuagint and Longenecker<sup>463</sup> tells us it refers to the setting apart of the firstborn son of each family and also the first born male from amongst the livestock;<sup>464</sup> the first part of every person's baked goods and also of their harvest;<sup>465</sup> the Levites<sup>466</sup> and also the nation of Israel itself which is set apart from the other nations.<sup>467</sup>

The most likely connection here is for Paul to be saying that he was set apart for a special duty as were the priests and the Israelites – and we are reminded of λειτουργός – Paul the ministering servant in Romans 15:16 and thus perhaps also

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<sup>459</sup> Kaiser, Walter Jr *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Google eBook) Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012 np (Introduction.)

<sup>460</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* 101.

<sup>461</sup> Rengstorf, Karl Heinrich "ἀπό' τολος" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume I* p420.

<sup>462</sup> Leviticus 20:26; Jewett, Robert *Romans* p102.

<sup>463</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p56.

<sup>464</sup> Exodus 13:12.

<sup>465</sup> Numbers 15:20.

<sup>466</sup> Numbers 8:11.

<sup>467</sup> Leviticus 20:26.

priest of the gospel.<sup>468</sup> We remember that Paul described himself as set apart ‘to’ or ‘for’ the gospel and so he sees his separation in positive (to something) rather than negative (from something) terms.<sup>469</sup> We see Paul as not only priest though, but also as a prophet, like Jeremiah, set apart by God.<sup>470</sup>

## 6.4 African

### 6.4.1 Traditional – Sangomas, badimo and jogi

Once again, as we attempt to draw the traditional African voice into our web, we acknowledge that we are working a step removed from reality because I as the author do not have first-hand experience of these traditions.

*“That is alright, please carry on,” reminded Thembi.*

*“Thanks, I will then!”*

Our understanding of traditional African religion is still evolving and we will probably never know what uncorrupted (by Christianity or other colonial activity) African beliefs looked like. We do know, however, that in common with the Graeco-Roman sphere, beliefs varied from place to place. There was not one common African religion. The certain belief in one and only one true God that was held by the Jews and Christians may have been absent in pre-Christian Africa. John Mbiti says:

A great number of beliefs and practices are to be found in any African society. These are not, however, formulated into a systematic set of dogmas which a person is expected to accept. People simply assimilate whatever religious ideas and practices are held or observed by their families and communities. These traditions have been handed down from forebears, and each generation takes them up with modifications suitable to its own historical situation and needs.<sup>471</sup>

Having said this, Mbiti himself *does* believe that the African religions are monotheistic:

The main words for God are often similar in different and related languages and same regions, while they may differ considerably over the entire continent. The belief in God is spread everywhere, and all African peoples acknowledge God and speak of God, holding many attributes about God and

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<sup>468</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p100. He says that Paul describes his ministry in priestly terms.

<sup>469</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p57.

<sup>470</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p57.

<sup>471</sup> Mbiti, John *African Religions & Philosophy* London: Heinemann, 1990 p3.

making expressions of relationship with God. African Religion is intensely monotheistic and revolves around God as the supreme maker of all things, both living and non-living, both visible and invisible, both physical and spiritual.<sup>472</sup>

*“This sounds too good to be true. I wonder if it really was like that? Or are we being gently revisionist?” questioned Thando.*

In fact, some African writers now contest this and claim that Christian missionaries had distorted understandings of traditional religion.

According to p'Bitek, then, the Central Luo believe in a whole host of forces or powers called, in their language, *jogi* (plural of *jok*), each independent of the rest. These *jogi* are regarded as responsible for particular types or patterns of happenings... Some *joks* may be used against other *joks*, but no one *jok* dominates all. This is a far cry, indeed, from the Christian religious ontology which postulates an omnipotent creator *ex nihilo*...<sup>473</sup>

*“Hm. There are undoubtedly similarities in certain tribal contexts to the Christian or Jewish religions, but there also undoubtedly many differences and I would guess the differences predominate,” said Thembi.*

Looking for an African resonance to κλητός we see that the concept of call comes in to the traditional African experience when a person is called to be a *sangoma*.

The *Sangoma* would often, as a young person during a severe illness, be 'called' by the *Badimo* through a dream and then seek guidance and training from an elder *Sangoma*. Having been 'called' by the *Badimo* the individual has no option but to train. If an individual should try to resist the 'call' various symptoms of disease would develop, some of which according to description could be classified as those of psychosis.<sup>474</sup>

Here the *Sangoma* is a particular type of traditional healer. The *Badimo* are ancestral spirits.

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<sup>472</sup> Mbiti, John *Introduction to African Religion: Second Edition* Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2015 p x.

<sup>473</sup> Wiredu, Kwasi “Introduction: Decolonising African Philosophy and Religion” in *Decolonizing African Religion: A Short History of African Religions in Western Scholarship* (ed. Okot p'Bitek) Brooklyn: Diasporic Africa Press, 2011 p xxxvii.

<sup>474</sup> Staugard, Frants “Traditional Health Care in Botswana” in *The Professionalisation of African Medicine* (ed. Murray Last and GL Chavunduka) Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988 p57.

The call described here is a common experience in South African culture and may even now by some, be understood better than the Christian idea of call. This sort of reader of the letter to the Romans may visualise Paul being called by his ancestors in a dream to perform some particular function or duty and the reader would find this consistent with his or her ideo-theological position.

*“That’s true! They may see no inconsistency between African traditional beliefs and the Bible in this case,” agreed Thembi.*

*“Paul, when seen as someone called by his ancestors, may have been elevated in the reader’s eyes,” said Thando.*

*“Yes, but he may also be the object of some sympathy, because it would be known that he had no choice but to follow the call and had to abandon any plans or ambitions of his own!” exclaimed Thembi.*

#### 6.4.2 Black Consciousness – praxis first and suspicious privilege

One of the fundamentals of Black Theology is that it rises, not primarily (or perhaps not at all) from God, but out of the suffering of black people. The centre, the beginning, is not God but humanity. Black Theology’s close cousin Liberation Theology tells us that theology comes from praxis and not vice versa.<sup>475</sup> It follows that if a person were to be called, it would perhaps be the need of the suffering people who called them, but not God.

Steve Biko was an anti-apartheid activist and one of the originators of the South African Black Consciousness movement. Due to his outspokenness, he was detained without trial and was tortured by the South African police. This torture led to his death.<sup>476</sup> Not only was his death a terrible thing, but the callous attitude that the South African authorities showed was despicable.<sup>477</sup> As it happens, Biko was 31 years old when he died – nearly the same age that Jesus was when he was crucified. Inevitably, this was noticed and it added something to the significance of

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<sup>475</sup> Gutiérrez, Gustavo *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* Orbis Books 1988, no page Google e-book.

<sup>476</sup> Biko, Steve *I Write What I Like* p2.

<sup>477</sup> Woods, Donald *Biko* New York: Vintage Books, 1979 p254.

his death. These are the words of Desmond Tutu at Biko's funeral – words that convey depth of feeling and invite us to see meaning in death.

It all seems such a senseless waste of a wonderfully gifted person, struck down in the bloom of youth, a youthful bloom that some wanted to see blighted. What can be the purpose of such wanton destruction? God, do you really love us? . . . Oh God, how long can we go on? . . . In our grief and through our tears, we recall. Let us recall, my dear friends, that nearly 2000 years ago a young man was done to death and hanged like a common criminal on a cross outside a city where they jeered at him and made fun of him. Let us recall how his followers were dejected and quite inconsolable in their grief. It all seemed so utterly meaningless, so utterly futile. This young man, God's own son, Jesus Christ, had come preaching the good news of God's love for all his children. . . Because Jesus saw himself as the son, the great liberator, God himself, the God who sided with a miserable, oppressed and disorganised group of slaves.<sup>478</sup>

People like Steve Biko are, in this sense, no doubt part of the called. It does not really matter to us here whether Biko had some sort of spiritual experience or not. He responded to the need of his people and went into action on their behalf. Not everyone paid the ultimate price, but even today, those who were detained without trial, those who were banned, wear the experience as a badge.<sup>479</sup> They are set apart from those who accepted the status quo and from those activists fortunate enough not to have been specifically noticed by the authorities in this way.

*“So the voice of Black Consciousness encourages us to look at these words from another angle – does God only call through a voice from heaven or does he also call through the cries of the people?” asked Thando.*

*“I think that during the struggle the voices of both Traditional Africa and Black Consciousness would have been loud in the activists' ears as they read the letter to the Romans,” suggested Thembi.*

There is another dimension, however, which is put into words by Itumeleng Mosala. This is a reaction to the potential for domination and power in Paul's claiming for himself the call of God. If Paul is who he says he is, then he is in a

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<sup>478</sup> Tutu, Desmond *The Rainbow People of God* Cape Town: Juta, 2006 p18.

<sup>479</sup> For example see biographical note on Rev Brian Brown in *Telegraph & Argus* September 2006, found on line [http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/local/airelocal/907666.Apartheid\\_struggle\\_hero\\_is\\_new\\_minister/?ref=arc](http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/local/airelocal/907666.Apartheid_struggle_hero_is_new_minister/?ref=arc).

position of privilege and of power and anything he says may be seen as oppressive and coercive. Gerald West explains Mosala's stance:

The Bible is a resource for liberation, but it is also a source of oppression and domination, and not just in the way it has been used by the missionary-colonial project; the Bible is in part intrinsically oppressive (Mofokeng 1988:34; Mosala 1989:41). The ideological ambiguity of the Bible is a significant feature of liberation hermeneutics, resulting in an intertwining of suspicion and trust in the ideo-theological orientation of liberation hermeneutics.<sup>480</sup>

*Thembi is trying to make sense of this. "So the struggle voice looks at this verse and asks - Can we trust it? Is this an honest explanation of who Paul is, or is it another stick with which to beat ourselves? Are these words ones which can be used by the oppressor against us?"*

*"Yes, we are suspicious that 'they' will see themselves as the called and that in their minds we have another role to play," said Thando.*

In order to achieve success in the struggle we realise that activists needed to take hold of the Bible and its narrative and place themselves in the centre of the story as active agents.<sup>481</sup> Placing themselves in this story they might have said, 'We are the called. Steve Biko will not die for nothing. No one else will define us or tell us who we are to be.'

The concept of 'set apartness' is something of a battlefield for the struggle. It was the cause of suffering for black people and so Black Consciousness cries out against it, as does Simon Gqubule here, for example:

By "black" we mean a person who obviously looks black (or brown or ebony or copper-coloured) in appearance. But "black" in South Africa means far more than mere appearance. It speaks of the whole history of domination, oppression, privation, disenfranchisement and discrimination by the Whites... He insists on calling us "non-whites," and this negative appellation we totally

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<sup>480</sup> West, Gerald O. "Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa" p4-5; Mofokeng, T. "Black Christians, the Bible and liberation" in *Journal of Black Theology* 2,34-42, 1988 p34; Mosala, Itumeleng J. *Biblical hermeneutics and black theology in South Africa* p41.

<sup>481</sup> James Cone writes about being agents Cone, James H. & Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black Theology 1980-1992* New York: Orbis Books, 1993 p197.

reject, because it sets whiteness as a norm and anything that is not white is regarded as a deviation from the norm.<sup>482</sup>

Naturally this lived experience of discrimination could lead to suspicion of those who claim to have been set apart and to be privileged. Many in the Black Consciousness movement hoped for an inclusive, multiracial or non-racial future, but for others this seemed an unrealistic goal. Bonganjalo Goba says:

I want to emphasize that all theology is ideological in the sense that it projects a political vision of those who participate in it. This is why I disagree with Allan Boesak when he makes the following statement:

Christian faith transcends all ideologies and all nationalistic ideals. It transcends specific groups and nations with specific ideals and interests (Farewell to Innocence:121).

This to my mind reflects a profound misunderstanding of the nature of a theological hermeneutic. A dangerous ahistorical perspective which contradicts Allan Boesak's view of the black experience. I make this observation because the starting point of a relevant theology is an actual involvement in the struggle and as such involvement reflects or embodies the emancipatory interests of those who are in it. So Black Theology occurs within the context of the black struggle and inescapably will reflect the ideological interests of the black community.<sup>483</sup>

This helps us to understand the battlefield that even now exists when cultures come together in an attempt at co-operation which is liberating.

*"Is it possible to be together, rather than set apart, without losing important parts of our identities and ourselves? Did the Jews and Greeks have similar fears about their cultures and cultural identity?" wondered Elmarie.*

#### 6.4.3 Desmond Tutu – school teacher to struggle hero

It is informative to look at Tutu's sense of call – or lack of it. He does not share with us any Damascus Road experience that he may have had, but rather the role he

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<sup>482</sup> Gqubule, Simon "What is Black Theology" in *Journal of Theology of South Africa* 8,16-23, 1974 p18-19.

<sup>483</sup> Goba, Bonganjalo "The Impact of the Black Consciousness Movement on Black Theology" in *The Unquestionable Right To Be Free* (ed. Itumeleng J. Mosala, and Buti Tlhagale) Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1985 p65; Boesak, Allan A. *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power* New York: Orbis Books, 1977.



played in the struggle seemed to be inevitably thrust upon him. I have selected just a few key periods in his life and from his autobiography to illustrate this.

Desmond Tutu had trained as a school teacher and was very successful, well-paid and in line to be made a school principal. Apartheid prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd did not have the same vision for education as Tutu did.

“The Bantu teacher,” Verwoerd told parliament, “must be integrated as an active agent in the ... development of the Bantu community. He must not learn to feel above the community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community.” Verwoerd proposed to save money... “The salaries which European teachers enjoy are in no way a fit or permissible criterion for the salaries of Bantu teachers.” After discussions with Leah, Desmond decided, “I just couldn’t be part of this... I said to myself, sorry, I’m not going to be a collaborator in this nefarious scheme. So I said, ‘What can I do?’”... In later life Tutu was quite frank about how he discerned his vocation: “It wasn’t for very highfalutin ideals that I became a priest. It was almost by default ... I couldn’t go to medical school ... The easiest option was going to theological college.”<sup>484</sup>

Tutu did well at his studies, but did not seem greatly inspired to rush into political activity. The events around Sharpeville were turning points for the liberation movement, but “‘Even then,’ reflected Desmond Tutu later, ‘I can’t say that I was madly political and angry.’”<sup>485</sup> In a paper on Black Theology which Tutu wrote in 1973 after attending a conference in New York we start to see some of the fire which burned in him,

No, it is just a straightforward, perhaps shrill, statement about an existent. Black theology is. No permission is being requested for it to come into being . . . . Frankly the time has passed when we will wait for the white man to give us permission to do our thing. Whether or not he accepts the intellectual respectability of our activity is largely irrelevant. We will proceed regardless.<sup>486</sup>

Yet, again, when he was invited to come back from England, where he had made his home, to take up a significant church appointment in South Africa, we see his reluctance. His wife, Leah, was very opposed to the move. She knew that in South Africa she would no longer be treated as a ‘normal’ human being, but expected to be unduly subservient. There would be a big drop in income and it would

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<sup>484</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p60-61.

<sup>485</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p72.

<sup>486</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p139.

be unsettling for the children. Desmond asked Bill Burnett, then archbishop of Cape Town for advice:

Burnett replied that he understood the reservations and that the job would not be an easy one: "I think your coming would, however, be a clear personal witness to the Lordship of Jesus in your own life and also a proclamation by the Church that He is Lord." In Desmond's recollection, the response of the children was decisive: "We said this must be a family decision. The children said, 'Daddy, you must go back.'" Desmond told Timothy Bavin his name could go forward to the cathedral council. Leah continued to be strongly opposed: "Leah was very, very upset: It strained our marriage very much."<sup>487</sup>

The difference between the calls of Paul and Desmond Tutu, as we see them, is quite marked.

*"Paul was confident, Tutu comes across as diffident," said Carol.*

*"Maybe the context has something to do with this, and also possibly their own personalities?" offered Thembi.*

*"Yes, it is sometimes hard to remember that Tutu did not know that he was to become an iconic struggle hero. Paul, on the other hand, seemed to have a better idea of the magnitude of his role as apostle to the Gentiles and his building of the church," agreed Carol.*

*"Or do we just read that back into what he wrote and did? There must have been times – especially in that early fourteen years when he was waiting for his call to come into effect"<sup>488</sup> – when he felt the diffidence of Tutu," remembered Junia.*

*"Was Paul set on fire by circumstances as, ultimately, Tutu was? Or he was motivated purely by his felt call of God? There is certainly more to being called than first meets the eye," said Carol thoughtfully.*

## **6.5 Afrikaner**

### **6.5.1 The people – God's mission and Afrikaner culture, privilege**

*"The concepts of 'call' and to be 'set apart' were significant during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa," explained Elmarie. "The word apartheid itself*

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<sup>487</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p144.

<sup>488</sup> Galatians 2:1.

*comes from the policy of separate development, where the races in South Africa were set apart from each other.”*

For the Afrikaner, the sense of being called was deeply part of their identity. Charles Villa-Vicencio writes that the Afrikaner’s sense of calling had three parts.<sup>489</sup> The first was the Christian missionary task. During the time of the Voortrekkers and the Boer republics, they believed themselves to be God’s instruments. Their purpose was to ‘Christianise the heathen’. They were also to attempt to include Afrikaner culture into the divine mission and thirdly to establish South Africa as a base for the white race and to further the cause of western civilisation and capitalism.

Thus, these words of Paul’s may have resonated with the Afrikaner in a special way, as they identified with Paul.

*“That’s right. We Afrikaners also thought of ourselves as agents of the divine, called to be sent, but for us, into Africa,” said Elmarie.*

From the Trekker’s conception of their special calling one infers the following: The sense of responsibility of Christians towards the heathen, of a higher towards a lower form of civilisation; the protection of the heathen people from internecine murder, plunder and violence; the shielding of the Cape Colony from inroads by natives; the promotion of “Christian civilisation” and the encouragement of the spread of “Evangelical doctrine and the education of the Heathen races”, The Trekkers thus saw themselves as the instruments in God’s hand who would civilise the non-whites and assist in their conversion to Christianity.<sup>490</sup>

This Afrikaner understanding of their call explains the worst fears of those afraid of an oppressive use of the Bible. The dominant Afrikaner saw themselves set apart as the superior race.

*“It was a thing of pride, privilege and responsibility,” said Elmarie.*

*“But for the oppressed dark-skinned people it was a humiliation and a deprivation of basic human rights,<sup>491</sup>” said Thando.*

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<sup>489</sup> Villa-Vicencio, Charles “S.A. Civil Religion: An Introduction” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 19, 5-15, 1977 p11.

<sup>490</sup> Van Jaarsveld, F.A. “Afrikaner Calling and Mission” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 19, 16-28, 1977 p19.

<sup>491</sup> For example Thomson, Doug “Apartheid, Laws” p83.

*“Yes, it meant being set apart from jobs by distance, from opportunity by job-reservation and low levels of education and of course set apart from people of other races and from facilities reserved for them. It also meant being subject to verbal and physical abuse which was by and large sanctioned by the state. Justice was not something which always applied to them – we remember Steve Biko,<sup>492</sup> amongst others.”*

*“So perhaps the Afrikaner read these words of Paul and felt a sense of self-satisfaction at being amongst the company of the called,” suggested Thembi. “Or perhaps they felt burdened by a sense of duty.”*

*“True, but I guess that this may have been a more comfortable phrase for we Afrikaners to read than it was for the black oppressed,” admitted Elmarie.*

This sense of arrogance is expressed in the police minister, Jimmy Kruger’s response when the post mortem on Steve Biko was released. This is the same person who famously was ‘left cold’ by Biko’s death.<sup>493</sup>

On 9 November, Kruger admitted that Biko died of brain damage, but added, ‘a man can damage his brain many ways.’ Unable to contain his sense of humour, Kruger told a foreign press luncheon, ‘I have also felt like banging my head against a brick wall many times, but realising now, with the Biko autopsy, that may be fatal, I haven’t done it.’<sup>494</sup>

*“Oh! I didn’t know he said that!” exclaimed Elmarie, horrified.*

*“We said earlier that Paul may have been confident due to his call and commissioning by God, but this arrogance goes far beyond confidence,” said Thando, also shocked. “Paul’s supreme belief in his calling came out of seeing himself as a slave to Jesus rather than from having the power to commit this sort of self-serving brutality.”*

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<sup>492</sup> Biko, Steve *I Write What I Like* p2.

<sup>493</sup> Woods, Donald *Biko* p 254.

<sup>494</sup> Bizos, George *No One to Blame?: In Pursuit of Justice in South Africa* Cape Town: New Africa Books, 1998 p49.

### 6.5.2 D.F. Malan – Afrikaner liberation

We have already seen that D.F. Malan felt that his call from God was to the Afrikaner nation. We repeat a quote used in the introductory material of this thesis as a reminder:

I have undertaken to myself to use my weak powers to work for the Afrikaner nation and not to budge one inch from my path. To make it clear to the nation that God is also the Sovereign of its history, and that he needs to be recognised as such in the national life – this is as much an extension of God's kingdom as it is to preach the Gospel to the heathens.<sup>495</sup>

It is interesting to see the parallels between Malan and Desmond Tutu. Both were theologically trained; both studied overseas and were in fact overseas during significant events at home; both expressed initial apathy (at least compared to their later firm convictions) – Malan to the Anglo-Boer war and Tutu to events leading up to Sharpeville; both were drawn home to become influential speakers and writers; both developed a degree of nationalism, although, in my opinion, Malan far more so than Tutu.

*“Although Malan credits his call to the Afrikaner nation to God, it is clear that it arose out of his concern for the hardships of his people and his desire to rescue them and lead them on to solid ground,” said Elmarie.*

*“In fact it might be said that Malan was an unwitting early proponent of liberation theology!” exclaimed Thando.*

*“It is certainly hard for my 21<sup>st</sup> century Methodist Christian mind to believe that his call did actually come from the God that I see in the New Testament,” asserted Carol.*

This brings us again to ask whether Paul's calling also came out of the needs of his people. The differences between Paul's situation and those of both Tutu's and Malan's are significant. Paul's Damascus experience was apparently a supernatural event with a direct message to him from God – a message of which he was unlikely to have conceived, left to himself. Paul's subsequent actions were in many ways

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<sup>495</sup> Koorts, Lindie *DF Malan* p41.

damaging to the Jews and the Pharisees – his own people – insofar as it denied their unique position.

On the other hand, if the purpose of this letter is Paul's call to the people of Spain, as we suggested earlier, it may well have come from his own desire and his own recognition of the needs of the people there. In this specific instance, his experience may have been similar to that of Tutu and Malan.

### 6.5.3 Calvinist – all predestined

The Calvinist background of the Afrikaner people is often blamed for the hardness and inflexibility that they demonstrated.<sup>496</sup> In particular, when it comes to the question of call, John Calvin did take a very hard line. God decided ahead of time who would be called to salvation and into his kingdom (the elect) and who would not receive this call (the reprobate). The individual whose fate is at hand has no say in the matter. Here Calvin says:

To make faith the cause of election is quite absurd and at variance with the words of Paul. For, as Augustine wisely observes, he does not call them elect because they are about to believe, but in order that they may believe; he does not call them elect whom God foresaw would be holy and immaculate, but in order that they might be made so. Again, God did not choose us because we believed, but in order that we might believe, lest we should seem first to have chosen Him.<sup>497</sup>

While Calvin's understanding of predestination was more nuanced than is often perceived, this kind of thinking does lead to a belief in and a fear of an unappeasable God.

*"When one's master is perceived to be one who predestines your path and then punishes you when you do what you have no choice but to do, it does not predispose one to loving and kind relationships with others," said Elmarie.*

*"We can imagine the Afrikaner living with a sense of anger at the injustice of life and finding meaning and hope in the domination of others," agreed Carol.*

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<sup>496</sup> See for example Cochran, Robert F., and Van Drunen, David *Law and the Bible: Justice, Mercy and Legal Institutions* Leicester: IVP, 2013 p198.

<sup>497</sup> Calvin, Jean (John) *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997 p69.

It is only fair to John Calvin to include another quote, this time from one of his letters. Here it does not paint a picture of one called by God and obliged to obey relentlessly:

I need not tell you, that he has given you a help which everyone has not. This is, that you have a Sarah who will be ready to follow you, whithersoever that kind Father shall call you; so that it depends on yourself alone whether or not you shall follow the example of our father Abraham.<sup>498</sup>

## 6.6 My voice

### 6.6.1 Wesleyan/ Methodist – an emphasis on call

My church tradition has a strong emphasis on call. The primary qualification for many functions in the Methodist Church is a sense of call to that ministry. The formal qualification of Local Preacher, Deacon and Ordained Presbyterian (or minister) all have call as their entry point. When as a young person I debated whether or not to become a Local Preacher I needed to wrestle with whether God was calling me or not. This raised a whole lot of questions about what a call looked like or felt like. I don't remember what was in it, but there was a little booklet that described call and how to determine if one had this call.

The effect of this was to make me very nervous as I was reluctant to claim certainty that God had told me that I should be a Local Preacher.

*"I know what you mean. It feels arrogant, doesn't it?" sympathised Carol. "I am also a Local Preacher. It was quite a process!"*

Having crossed that hurdle, a number of years later I offered myself for the full time ministry to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Once again the key thing was call.

All those who made it past the local hurdles were required to come before District screening committees who would listen to our accounts of our calls and help discern whether they were truly from God. As we journeyed through six years of probation and training, we were continually 'testing our call.' For many of my fellow travellers this was nonsense and they graduated through the various processes by

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<sup>498</sup> Calvin, John *Letters of John Calvin* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007 p121.

having learnt the right answers to the questions, rather than by having any certainty of call at all. Many of these were black Africans.

*“I can guess,” said Thando, “for them calls came in dreams as they did for sangomas, but these calls were not always acceptable to western examiners.”*

*“That’s right!”*

Back in the 1980s, when I became a Local Preacher and was reading Paul with youthful eyes, the thought of being called by God was awe-inspiring. I elevated Paul in my mind to some high station that I would never have thought of attaining (nor would I think of it now, in fact). When we study lists of spiritual gifts, the gift of apostleship seemed to me to be too holy for ordinary mortals. I would never have thought of suggesting that I could also be an apostle.

John Wesley’s own entry into the ministry was not heralded by flashing lights, but by careful consideration and a desire to serve God faithfully.

His father wrote him on January 26th, 1725, to express his pleasure that his son had such a high conception of the work of a minister, and to point out the motives that should govern his choice of such a life. “The principal spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God and the service of His Church in the edification of our neighbour. And woe to him who, with any meaner leading view, attempts so sacred a work.”<sup>499</sup>

Differently to Calvinism, Wesleyans believe in free choice and thus we are free to respond God’s call or to reject it. Paul’s choice to respond to God’s call then may be seen as an affirmation of the goodness and rightness of God’s way and also attests to Paul’s courage and faithfulness.

#### 6.6.2 Modified Existentialist – no blind following

I am hesitant to legitimise a voice in my head. My first reaction would be to look for an external source of this voice.

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<sup>499</sup> Telford, John *John Wesley: The World is My Parish – The Life of Wesley* Belfast: Ambassador International no date p37-38.



*“Our interjections in this thesis must really be giving you a hard time!” laughed Carol.  
“Sh!”*

Probably I am too rational to be a true existentialist. I can understand Paul’s call because I know his story. I know that he had flashing lights and drama and there was little question that something supernatural was happening. While I would like to have this sort of certainty as I navigate through life, I also need to admit that I would be scared of phenomena which I did not understand. I believe in Paul’s call. I have come to believe in my call. I understand John Wesley better – a struggle to determine God’s will, a continual testing, looking for signs of his approval. I do believe in the existence of these signs. I also look for the internal conviction that God is speaking.

*“The church community often helps with this,” suggested Carol.*

While I value the contribution of the community, I tend to feel that my call is about *me* and I will only believe it when *I* am convinced. I would never presume to tell someone else that they have a specific call (or not without a lot of thought and prayer first.) Their call is their responsibility and my call is mine – although we may help each other.

I will not undertake something without understanding all the ins and outs. If I am to be called I would prefer to know the cost and to know the direction and to essentially be in control. Of course, being in the ministry of the Methodist Church and under the discipline of the church has meant that I have become used to not always being in control.

*“The church does not always seem to be logical, well-prepared or even sympathetic to individuals,” said Carol.*

Albert Nolan ran some workshops with people much like me during the struggle era. They came up with a conclusion with which I can identify well,

But we need to understand what that role will be. *We*, as whites, will not be the saviours of South Africa. It is the oppressed, under God, who will save South Africa. We need to develop the humility to join with them and support

them or, at the very least, we need to ensure that we do not stand in the way as obstacles to the change that is coming.<sup>500</sup>

‘But we *need* to understand’. Those could have been my words, even as I was willing to step back and not be the saviour.

I read Paul and see how he seems to have overcome all the struggles that I have. He is called and he is willing, committed, and responsible. He seems to have knowledge of the mysteries of God that I don’t have – surely he must, because he seems to understand. He must surely have the conviction that he is right and that God truly has called him – the conviction that I would need in a similar situation. He seems more comfortable being set apart than I would be. It must be the reason that he is set apart that makes it acceptable to him. Or perhaps he is less sensitive to the opinions of those around him than I am.

Not so much now, but when I was younger I would have felt jealous of the role that Paul played. Jealous of the role black people played in their own liberation.

*“Wishing for significance. Been there, done that,” agreed Carol.*

## **6.7 More in Romans – the company of the called, privilege lost**

We expand the web of content into two areas within the letter to the Romans. Firstly, by tracing the substantive use of κλητός in the letter (a level one intertextual examination) and then by looking at the idea of privilege (a level three intertextual examination.)

### **6.7.1 Growing the company of the called**

We saw earlier that Paul was part of a long line of people called by God. Just a few verses along Paul invites his readers to join him in the company.

*Verse 6: including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ*

Here we have καὶ ὑμεῖς κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ with the plural form of κλητός. As Paul was a called one, the readers of the letter are themselves called ones of Jesus Christ. Jewett argues, following Frédéric Godet, that this verse establishes

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<sup>500</sup> Nolan, Albert *To Nourish Our Faith: Theology of Liberation for Southern Africa* Benoni: The order of Preachers, 1987 p9.

that the Roman believers are within Paul's sphere, within his apostolic domain.<sup>501</sup> While Jewett continues, saying that Paul does not establish this in order to make himself a leader, but rather a diplomat, we would like to go further.

*"It seems reasonable to say that Paul establishes this in order to minimise any idea of his privilege that may be felt if he is seen as unique in being part of the called," said Phoebe.*

*"For those readers who were seeing privilege in Paul's position – as the Jews and we Afrikaners may have – there is a dilution of privilege," observed Elmarie, "as Paul obviously does not describe himself as elite. His realm is open to others. There are many people in the company of the called."*

*"To those who were feeling excluded such as perhaps the Greeks or the South African black people under apartheid, this is now a specific inclusion," continued Thembi. "The reader might feel justified that their gut feel that they should also be part of this has proved to be right."*

*"But then, some may have built up an anger at the incipient oppression and felt proved right that the Bible is in league with the elite," countered Thando. "Now they come to realise that their anger is misplaced. Paul made sure to bring these words in early to present the correct perspective."*

Verse 7a: *To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.*

Here we see the Greek κλητοῖς ἁγίοις. The word ἁγίοις being the plural dative form of ἅγιος meaning devoted to god, holy or saint.<sup>502</sup> Thus this letter is written to 'called saints' or 'called holy ones' and we recognise that the words 'to be' in the RSV are not explicit in the Greek text.

*"Paul reiterates the inclusion stated in the previous verse and makes it more certain that the reader should understand that this is about him or her," said Phoebe.*

As Paul was κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, the believers of Rome are described as κλητοὶ ἅγιοι – the called ones, the holy ones. Holy things were sacred and set

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<sup>501</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p112; Godet, Frédéric *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Rev. and ed. T. W. Chambers) 1883 Reprint Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977.

<sup>502</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* headword ἅγιος.

apart<sup>503</sup> and thus Paul is also including the people in his own separation from that which is common. Like him, they are called and like him, they are set apart. We read this verse as a further denial of Paul's privilege and his preference that believers should all see themselves as part of the company of the called – and of the set apart.

Chapter 8 verse 28: *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.*

Here again we see the plural dative in τοῖς κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς οὖσιν and 'the called' are now indicated as being part of a plan or an intent or are 'the purposely called'.<sup>504</sup>

The following verses give a progression of foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified. These verses are often used to reinforce the Calvinist doctrine of God's sovereign right to determine who he calls.<sup>505</sup>

*"We understand that these words may be appropriated arrogantly by those who feel the privilege and duty rests on them or their tribe alone," said Jewish Miriam.*

*"On the other hand, these verses and the ones following provided some of the strongest words of encouragement given by black preachers during the struggle," added Thando.*

*"Yes, indeed. They appropriated these words, not as being exclusive, but as being an indication of God's commitment and faithfulness to those who followed him."*<sup>507</sup>

In particular, they liked to use verse 37, 'No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.'<sup>506</sup> As Esler says, "Now the glory is forthcoming, rather than future, and has a direct, organic connection with present experience. It exists on the horizon of the present, even if it is not already here."<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p 56.

<sup>504</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* headword πρό εἰς, in particular κατὰ πρόθεσιν.

<sup>505</sup> For example Nystrom, Carolyn *John Calvin: Sovereign Hope* Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2002 p 27-28.

<sup>506</sup> For example Tutu, Desmond *Hope and Suffering* p44, 72.

<sup>507</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p265.

### 6.7.2 Dealing with privilege lost

We turn now to one of the level three suggestions about Paul being called, sent and set apart – that he was privileged in his relationship to God.

We have seen that not all readers would be struck by a sense of privilege in these words, but the Jews who were God's chosen people would most likely be thinking in terms of privilege gained and privilege lost. They were most likely a minority group in the Roman church<sup>508</sup>, which makes this a sensitive issue.

*"We are looking at higher level meanings here – so why did Paul say this?" asked Miriam.*

The first strands that we draw in to the web are to do with privilege misused.

*Romans 2:17-29.* Paul is addressing the Jews and his message is – if you think that you as a Judean are chosen and blessed by God, what have you done with that privilege? Nothing – you have lived just as those who did not receive these things. The climax of his argument is in verse 24, 'For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."' <sup>509</sup> His conclusion is in verse 29, 'He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God.' As Esler says:

[Paul] is working on well-established themes in Israelite tradition, such as that God looks to the inward reality, not the appearance of a person (as with David at 1 Sam. 16:7), but reusing them in the particular interests of bringing Judeans and Greeks together in the overarching identity of the Christ-movement.<sup>510</sup>

*"The Judean who hears this is forced to differentiate between the outward trappings of Judaism and what God truly requires of them," remarked Miriam.*

*"In the same way the Afrikaner, Black Consciousness supporter, Methodist, Greek and so on must differentiate between what defines them externally and what will gain them respect from both people and God, but more importantly from God," agreed Carol.*

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<sup>508</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p70.

<sup>509</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p220 has a nice analysis.

<sup>510</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p153.

Now we draw in strands speaking of the value that remains even after the loss of privilege.

*Romans 3:1,2: Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God.*

Paul intends to carry on his argument from the previous chapter, but intervenes with a question and answer that provides some reassurance for the Jewish Christians in Rome.<sup>511</sup> The Judeans may not be in a privileged condition in God's sight, but there is nonetheless advantage to being a Judean because they were the carriers of the law, they were the ones shaped by God's words.<sup>512</sup> That part of their history cannot be denied or taken away from them. The subsequent verses return to the assurance that Judean and non-Judean are equal in the way of faith.

The last verse in chapter 3 echoes verse 2 as it affirms the value of the law, but as Jewett notes the exclusion of the definite article suggest that the law that is upheld may be more general than the law of the Jews.<sup>513</sup>

Finally we add a strand that speaks to those who benefit from the lost privilege.

*Romans 11:13-24.* Here Paul uses the allegory of olive branches being cut off and others grafted in. He warns those who have been included after the others have lost their privilege that they too could be cut off. In this context, he is speaking to the Greek/ Roman believers and clearly he is warning them against exalting themselves over the Jewish people, or any others.<sup>514</sup>

In the South African context, we see a similar situation, in the state as well as in the church.

*"It could be said that white people were removed in order to include black people," said Elmarie, "although as in the early church the intention was for equality, not to create a new privileged group."*

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<sup>511</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p242.

<sup>512</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p153.

<sup>513</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p302.

<sup>514</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p678.

*“African traditionalism may have been replaced by Black Consciousness,” said Thembi.*

*“Black Consciousness is challenged by those calling for a non-racial future,” said Thando.*

*“The NG Kerk held a position of power under apartheid,” remembered Carol. “The Methodist Church which aligned itself with the oppressed during the struggle is now in a position of more influence – perhaps too much so in the eyes of some.”*

*“Paul’s warning is to us all – you may also be cut off. Be careful.”*

### **6.8 An interlude of thought**

The workshop group seemed a little subdued. They were certainly quiet.

“The name of God is blasphemed amongst black people because of me”, said Elmarie.

“The name of God is blasphemed among those who are still marginalised because of me,” said Thando.

“The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of me,” said Miriam.

“I wonder what people think about God because of me,” whispered Junia. “Do we have any right to speak at all?”

“Elmarie, someone had to bring the gospel to Africa. Your parents and their parents might have made mistakes, but they brought the gospel.”

“Thando, there is still work to be done, but what has been completed has built a solid foundation.”

“Miriam, you heard what Paul said. If we get our act together and live right, we can use our advantages for the benefit of each other.”

*“I must be honest and say that probably God is sometimes blasphemed because of me too,” said the author. “My Methodist beliefs, my rationality - they probably cause friction. I hope that sometimes my intellectual endeavours are helpful rather than hurtful.”*

*“I wonder if the workshop members are discouraged. This is challenging to me too. Will they rediscover the hope that they had earlier?” wondered the hidden observer.*

After a moment Junia spoke. “We were nothing if not ambitious when we concluded that we could all be Paul. Just as Paul has identified himself with each of us and our families, it makes sense that we should identify with Paul. But let’s face it, Paul is unique. If every second person were Paul, our lives and the lives of those in our community would be very different. What do those of you who seem to come from the future think? I can’t believe that you still remember Paul. Is he run-of-the-mill now? Nothing special?”

There was quiet again as they all thought about this.

Carol spoke thoughtfully, “Paul is still important to Christians. His writings are included in the scriptures that we have now. But there are also many people who are not Christians who don’t know anything about him. In your day, he must have been a celebrity. Maybe he was like Michael Jackson. Or rather, like Billy Graham or Rick Warren. I read Rick Warren on the internet all the time.”

Thembi said, “I think Desmond Tutu would be a better comparison. He has suffered for God’s people just like Paul did.”

“Oh no, will Paul suffer? What happens to him? Tell us!” cried Miriam.

“Hush, Miriam,” said Phoebe gently. “This whole situation is strange, but let’s use it well and not get hysterical. We can trust that Jesus will look after Paul. Carry on Thembi.”

“Thanks Phoebe. How would this sound? Desmond, a servant of Jesus Christ, called, sent and set apart. Only it feels very wrong to call *umfundisi* Tutu, Desmond.” Thembi squirmed in her discomfort.

“But Rick Warren writes letters to pastors and churches just like Paul did! Rick, a servant of Jesus Christ, a called one, a sent one, set apart,” continued Carol.

Junia laughed, “Now I think we are falling into the trap Paul hoped we would avoid. Yes, he is κλητὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ σπολοῦ, but he tells us that we are κλητοὶ ἅγιοι and also κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοί. That is there right at the beginning. He doesn’t want to be a celebrity and he very definitely wants us to be part of his company of the called.”



“Oh Junia! And you said we were ambitious before! It’s one thing to identify with Paul as a servant, but quite another to identify with him as one of the called, one of the prophets,” said Phoebe.

“You know, I had a dream,” said Thando. “I dreamt that I saw Moses. I said to him, ‘Moses, my people are suffering.’ He just looked at me. I said it three times. Then he walked away and in its place was a bush that was burning.”

“Your people, our people *are* suffering. They aren’t properly free yet. The suffering screams at me when I drive past shacks next to the highway. How can people live like that?” exclaimed Thembi.

“It is our duty to do something about it!” said Elmarie.

The others just looked at her.

“Is it possible that God chooses for them to live like that? Or has he chosen Thando to do something that will help? Surely God has it under control?” cried Carol.

“Wait. Let’s talk about it. Let’s try to hear what Jesus is saying,” Junia intervened, placating.

*“I was trying to work out what we really mean by identity. It is all very well to say that it is one of the Is with which we see and then think, but what is it? In maths an identity is something that is the same on both sides of the equation. So identity means sameness. But the whole point of the maths equation is that both sides are not identical! If they were exactly the same then the equation would be trivial and no information would be carried. Identity in maths has something to do with sameness and something to do with difference.*

*“But when people talk about their own identity what do they mean? Can I draw a parallel?”*

*The author pondered this. “You are definitely beginning to understand. One of the challenges – and strengths – of Conceptual Blending is to transcend this complexity. Identity is indeed about both sameness and difference, but this is difficult to formulate. Sometimes the I of imagination is desperately needed!”*

*“Give me an example,” asked the hidden observer.*

*“The researchers of Conceptual Blending use the example of Zeus.*

For example, Zeus as a bull and Zeus as a god and Zeus as a swan are the same, and in turn, the Cloud-Gatherer (a role) is the “same” as Zeus (its value). But the sameness of the god, the bull, and the swan is not a matter of resemblance and shared features.”<sup>515</sup>

*“Oh yes, I can see where this is going. Roles, life stages, names all change. But the individual is the same through all the differences.”*

*“Exactly! When you think about it, it is very strange that the baby you were many years ago is the same as the you of today.”*

*“And the me of today is the same me who will one day be drooling in a wheelchair in a retirement home. Yet if you were to compare photos of the three you would be hard-pressed to see the resemblance let alone the identity.*

*“Now that I think I am getting a handle on identity tell me a bit about integration. That is really the second I isn’t it? Imagination comes along last to try to make sense of it all!”*

*“Well, integration is really what Conceptual Blending is all about. As human beings we are always making blends. There are many, many different ways of integrating different “inputs”. A very simple one would be a photograph album. If you kept a picture of yourself taken every birthday in the album you would have an integrated blend of your life so far. Perhaps you keep your children’s achievement certificates – that would also be an integration. Your Facebook timeline is an integration of aspects of your life.”<sup>516</sup>*

*“That seems quite straightforward. What is so wonderful about it?”*

*“The wonderful thing is that we do it so well unconsciously! But what is also wonderful is the discoveries that we make using creative and different blends. I’ll explain it to you some more in a moment.”*

*“In the meantime, this group meeting here is a Conceptual Blend, isn’t it? Hah, I’ve caught you out. Now that I look around I see there are various buttons and*

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<sup>515</sup> Fauconnier & Tourner *Conceptual Blending* p11.

<sup>516</sup> For one of Fauconnier & Turner’s definitions of integration see *Conceptual Blending* p328-329, however the principle is discovered throughout the book.

*levers and controls. Can't we make them a bit more exciting? They are such goody-goodies. What happens if I pull this lever?"*

## **6.9 Critical analysis**

As in the last chapter, we could end here and allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions. However, for completeness, here is some of my own analysis arising from the blend.

### **6.9.1 The Blend**

I set up the blend to continue in the same scene as the previous one. I tried to inject some of the tension that I was finding, both between the idea of slave and privilege and between the experiences of the various contexts or voices. As the conversation emerged, I think much of what was expressed was my own confusion on how to deal legitimately with diversity.

This Conceptual Blend takes us into unusual territory. I would not have thought of identifying Rick Warren with Desmond Tutu. Is it a good identification? The problem is that they seem so different to each other. Yet the blend has pointed out that they are actually quite similar to each other and to Paul in that they are leaders whose first allegiance is to Jesus and who appear to be both called and sent and are people of influence. It helps us to see how Paul may well have gained a celebrity status – and perhaps this is why he began his introduction with 'slave'. Perhaps he was intentionally dampening the enthusiasm of his readers.

Our Blend participants have been too nice to struggle with potential negatives. But, although they were oohing and aahing over Paul, they did become somewhat critical and questioned those claiming to be called.

### **6.9.2 The Text**

#### ***Called***

The different voices have offered us many ideas of what a call may look like.

We have seen that the Afrikaner believed that they were called by God, yet many people looked at them with derision. Perhaps in the same way, Paul was suffering from delusions of grandeur. The Roman idea of apotheosis seems strange and even ridiculous to us today – perhaps putting Paul's claims in perspective. He

had a lot of competition in the grandeur stakes. For the Romans, calling or choosing often originated with people – to such an extent that it was people who appointed gods, as seen especially in apotheosis. At least some of the priestly orders were elected and philosophers held sway where people were willing to listen to them. The Blend pointed to three different types of call without that having been particularly in the mind of the author. Thando's dream could be called a direct word from God, such as Paul experienced. Carol, who saw the poverty around her, experienced a call from need. Elmarie was thrust back into her need to use her privilege to rescue others, which was not well received as it reminded her friends of the Afrikaner (or even white) paternalistic attitude.

The Black Consciousness thought that praxis precedes theology and that action precedes calling is challenging. It gives us the sense that the universe cried out for liberation for the Gentiles and thus Paul was thrust into the limelight. He was willing to speak and to suffer for others and in this was his calling. The follow through on this thought is that if Paul had not stood up, someone else would have done so. This sort of call is inconsistent with the description of Paul's call in Acts, but it does give a sense of perspective. The important thing is the role that Paul played, rather than in his own individual personality. In some way, he was the product of the need of his community. This discourages us from giving him celebrity status – until we realise the cult status that people like Steve Biko and Nelson Mandela have had thrust upon them.

How do we know that Paul's call was not an ancestral one? That belief is not in western culture, but does that mean it is not so? If the 'universe cried out' as we suggested above, could his ancestors not have cried out and called him to save the people? Perhaps in a metaphorical sense, just as the blood of Abel cried out to God. But the old testament's many warnings against occult practices, such as spiritualism and speaking to the dead makes it seem unlikely.

Could this metaphorical crying out of the universe and the ancestors have constituted an irresistible call such as Calvin envisaged? Again, this seems too far from what other parts of the Bible have to say, but it is interesting to put these disparate thoughts together.

## **Sent**

The sending of Paul, or more precisely his apostleship, does not find as many resonances as does his calling. We hear the echo in the Old Testament with the sending of the prophets. The Afrikaner had a definite sense that they were sent to the heathen in Africa, but that calling and sending is so problematic that the resonance is damped. Paul does not explicitly involve the whole Roman community in his apostleship as he does in his call. Rather as he is called to be sent the community is called to be holy, but also as part of God's purpose.

There is an interesting confluence of thought in that many who were considered called were mediators. Roman benefactors mediated between the wealthy and the poor, African *sangomas* mediate between the ancestors and the people, Roman augurs interpreted events for the people and the Old Testament prophets mediated between God and the people. It is this aspect of mediation that was, as far as we have seen, not emphasized by the Afrikaner people in their response to God's call. Unlike them, it would be consistent with what we have seen to label Paul a mediator.

## **Set Apart**

Paul, while he claimed to be set apart, did not claim privilege, but rather challenged those who claimed this for themselves.

The Afrikaners' sense of call and 'set apartness' resulted in an unhealthy, unbalanced regime. While the Roman extravagance may put us off and we certainly disdain their slavery and their brutality, much that was good from that society has been retained in our societies today. Both Roman leadership and Afrikaner leadership may have been arrogant and perhaps overambitious in their claims to be supported by God, yet they are hardly similar. There is much that we might still choose to emulate from the Roman people, while it is hard to find much to respect in the Afrikaner history that has been recounted, although perhaps here we need to practise more thoroughly the 'suspension of disbelief' in order to see what good there might be. This misuse of power and privilege challenges us not to accept what Paul says at face value. We remember how the Corinthians said, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to

nothing.” However, there is little reason to see in Paul’s sense of call and being set apart that which led to disaster in the Afrikaner’s sense of being apart.

This web of thoughts and meaning creates tangles, but also some places where a pattern forms. One of these is the removal of elitism. In chapter five we saw all people being reduced to slaves. Possibly even cursed. But we were all brought to a level. Here Paul makes a progression to say that we are all invited to belong to the company of the called. This is important as if things had been left the way they were, the message would have been oppressive. As it is, it is liberating as Paul levels us all off in order to offer the means to raise us all. Whoever we are. The levelling may have meant the loss of privilege, but many of the gains are still there – only now more benefit from them.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: GOSPEL

### 7.1 Introduction

#### ***“for the gospel of God” Romans 1:1c***

We now come to the word gospel. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, having been set apart for the gospel – the gospel of God. We enter the different worlds again, to hear the different voices speak.

From the outline:

[for the gospel  
of God]

The intertextual analysis will be straightforward insofar as we will focus on looking at the level one understanding of ‘gospel’ from the different contexts. We will not delve into ‘God’ as being too complex, and as it happens, it is dealt with to some extent in our discussions anyway. The level two context relating ‘gospel’ to ‘God’ will be mentioned. Because ‘gospel’ is used in a particular way by this writer, the level one meaning almost coincides with the level three meaning. There is a measure of interpretation that will inevitably occur.

We will not do additional matrixing at the end of the section, but it is included with the Greek voice where we are using it to help define the word ‘gospel.’

### 7.2 Graeco-Roman

#### 7.2.1 Greek - εἰς εὐαγγέλιον Θεοῦ - a good news of grace, salvation, kingdom

The Greek words are εἰς εὐαγγέλιον Θεοῦ, literally ‘into (or for, or towards) a good news<sup>517</sup> of God’ or ‘a gospel of God.’ The εἰς gives us a sense of the reason of Paul’s being set apart. It is not just that he is differentiated from others. The being set apart is not necessarily the point, it is a result of being ‘into (for) the gospel’.<sup>518</sup> Thus there is not necessarily any particular value being given to being set apart. The value may be in moving into the gospel’s space. What is more, this is the gospel of God.

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<sup>517</sup> Liddell and Scott *Lexicon* εὐαγγέλιον.

<sup>518</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p102.

The lack of the definite article with εὐαγγέλιον is noticed, but the article is implied as happens in koine Greek phrases with both a preposition and a genitive.<sup>519</sup> The appearance of the word in the singular, however, is significant and probably implies that the term has Jewish origins – the usual Greek form being in the plural. Although Paul adopted and used the term regularly, it likely was remembered from the ministry of Jesus and his use of Isaiah 61:1-2, speaking of being anointed to proclaim good news.”<sup>520</sup>

We know that Paul had in mind more than just the announcement of some good thing and the term could be called a ‘coded word’ – a word which has meaning attached which goes beyond face value – perhaps just as the word gospel has in English. Longenecker suggests that this was the distinctive message of the Jesus-followers, modelled on Jesus’s name for the content of his preaching and having to do with the breaking in of God’s reign and salvation.<sup>521</sup>

Looking now at the phrase, which is the next level of the intertextual analysis, we include ‘of God’. This genitive is intended to show that the source of the gospel is God – that he is the originator of it.<sup>522</sup> Jewett wonders why Paul uses a reference to God’s gospel in this introduction when he does not use it in his other letters. He finds the answer in the cosmopolitan nature of Paul’s audience and Paul’s desire to “achieve unity through conflict.” By naming ‘God’ as the source of the gospel rather than Jesus, he is aiming for generalised acceptance by both Jew and Greek.<sup>523</sup>

Paul also uses the word gospel by itself – such as in Romans 1:16. He also speaks of it as being of Christ as in Romans 15:19,<sup>524</sup> where it follows a reference to being of God in verse 16.

*“So there is no doubt that he is talking about the same gospel all the way through?” asked Junia.*

*“Yes, that reference to Romans 15 is reassuring. The gospel of Jesus is the gospel of God, in Paul’s eyes,” agreed Phoebe. “Paul even uses the genitive to refer to ‘my*

<sup>519</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p58.

<sup>520</sup> Dunn, James *Romans* p10; Longenecker *The Epistle to the Romans* p58, 61.

<sup>521</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p58.

<sup>522</sup> e.g. Jewett, Robert *Romans* p102.

<sup>523</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p102.

<sup>524</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p61.



*gospel' at times, showing again his own attachment to it.<sup>525</sup> Paul's gospel is God's gospel."*

We may build a link into verse 3 of chapter 1 using the RSV translation where the word gospel is explicitly used, unlike the Greek where it does not appear, but is implied by the context. Here we are told that it is the gospel of God's son. This is followed by a description of who Jesus is, probably using material that already existed when Paul wrote, and which he includes here.<sup>526</sup>

*"As we said, we won't follow all the possible links to 'Jesus' for fear of derailing ourselves and the Conceptual Blending team is on tight schedule," reminded Junia.*

To summarise, then, we might say that Paul is set apart into a system of life and belief that entails at least God, Christ, God's reign and salvation. We do believe that the coded word held a well-recognised expanded meaning at the time, but to be true to our method, this is all that we will say now.

*"It would be reasonable, and helpful, to summarise this further as the gospel of God's salvation in Christ," said Phoebe. "Now, where do we go?"*

### 7.2.2 Roman – announcing a new reign, freedom, justice

*"This is going to help me!" declared Junia. "I see that Jesus spoke of 'gospel' and how the Greek word is used, but as a Roman I'm sure I've heard it used differently!"*

According to N.T. Wright, the term gospel originally came into being as a term used by the Romans. He understands Paul's use of the term, on one hand, as the continuation of Isaiah's use of it, but also:

On the other hand, in the context into which Paul was speaking, "gospel" would mean the celebration of the accession, or birth, of a king or emperor. Though no doubt petty kingdoms might use the word for themselves, in Paul's world the main "gospel" was the news of, or the celebration of, Caesar.<sup>527</sup>

Thus, in Paul's view, the gospel was primarily announcing the reign of a new emperor – Jesus Christ. This was confrontational in that it set Jesus up against the

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<sup>525</sup> Romans 2:16, 16:25.

<sup>526</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

<sup>527</sup> Wright, N.T. *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul 1978-2013* London: SPCK, 2013. (Google e-book chapter "Paul's gospel and Caesar's empire.")

reigning Roman emperor and called people to enter a new dispensation. Obedience to Jesus and to his gospel meant a change of allegiance.

Ian Rock reminds us that just recently there would have been the major announcement of Nero's accession to the throne and also of Claudius' having been 'made' a god.<sup>528</sup> Paul and his listeners would have heard the speeches and what Rock describes as "the pervasive machinery of propaganda that is the gospel."<sup>529</sup>

This "good news" following on a chain of "good news" that reflected Claudius' achievements, would have resounded throughout the empire . . . Could it have been that the "good news" of the Roman Empire in pronouncing the new statuses of Claudius and Nero, using terms, at least in the case of Claudius, that were reserved and used throughout the Septuagint for the God of Israel ran counter to what Paul was willing to accept? <sup>530</sup>

James Harrison believes that Paul was modelling restrained correction:

The epistle of the Romans, it will be argued, is a potent example of how Paul taught Jewish and Gentile believers in the capital to renounce the idolatry of the imperial cult and the self-serving mores of Julio-Claudian society, without unwisely provoking the Roman ruler, and, more positively, with the aim of winning his praise through the benefactions of wealthy believers...<sup>531</sup>

To get an idea of what good news consisted for the Romans, Wright expands his concept of gospel:

Freedom, justice, peace and salvation were the imperial themes that you could expect to meet in the mass media of the ancient world, that is, on statues, on coins, in poetry and song and speeches. And the announcement of these themes, focused of course on the person of the emperor who accomplished and guaranteed them, could be spoken of as *euangelion*, 'good news', 'gospel.'<sup>532</sup>

It is difficult to guess whether the listeners' response to this government propaganda would have been as cynical as many of our responses would be today.

*"I think it would be," said Junia.*

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<sup>528</sup> Rock, Ian *Paul's Letter to the Romans* p100.

<sup>529</sup> Rock, Ian *Paul's Letter to the Romans* p159.

<sup>530</sup> Rock, Ian *Paul's Letter to the Romans* p100.

<sup>531</sup> Harrison, James R. "Paul Among the Romans" in *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (ed. Mark Harding) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013 p155-156.

<sup>532</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective* p63.

*“But if these announcements were εὐαγγέλια then surely a gospel was a good and exciting thing? Something that promised joy and a good time for the ordinary person?” asked Phoebe.*

*“Well, I am cynical about what the Roman rulers say, but I think most of us ‘ordinary readers’ are looking for similar excitement and promise in Paul’s gospel. Along with the tension of the challenge to the current regime!” said Junia.*

*“It is certainly a good way to hook us in and keep us reading (or listening) to find out more,” agreed Phoebe.*

### 7.3 Hebrew

#### 7.3.1 Old Testament – law and redemption

We would like to imagine what an Old Testament understanding of gospel would be.

*“I’ve been waiting for this,” smiled Miriam. “My Jewish beliefs are full of good news. But how are you going to choose which areas to mention?”*

For our purposes, we will look at two aspects which are drawn out of our discussion so far. The one is the gospel as a system of life and belief. The other is the gospel as a means of salvation.

*“That makes sense. The law of Moses pretty much constituted our system of life and belief.”*

We also see that God finding a way to save his people is a theme throughout the Old Testament. This became known as *heilgeschichte*, meaning that the Old Testament is a history of salvation which leads on to its fulfilment in the New Testament.<sup>533</sup> This is a useful thread for us to follow as we listen for the voice of the Old Testament heard by the Jew reading Romans.

Salvation was often thought of as a process of redemption. Walter Brueggemann explains that this redemption occurred in two ways. The first is that of a family obligation. Here the redeemer was required to protect the family honour and

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<sup>533</sup> Kaiser, Walter C. *The Christian and the Old Testament* Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1998 p274.

property and work towards retrieving either if it was lost. A man acted as a redeemer when he took his brother's widow as a wife to offer her protection and to continue the family line. The redeemer in any case was usually the next of kin.<sup>534</sup>

The imaginative capacity of theological interpretation in ancient Israel transposed a concrete family practice into an expansive theological image. In that transposition, YHWH is portrayed as the "redeemer" of Israel – the next of kin who acts to preserve Israel's life and protect its future.<sup>535</sup>

Alan Segal explains, using the book of Job, that this redemption had nothing to do with resurrection or immortality, but rather vindication before God.<sup>536</sup>

The second of Brueggemann's ways is the ransom. This is where something is exchanged for the life of another, for example the animal sacrifice given to ransom the first-born son which would otherwise belong to God.<sup>537</sup> This is effectively a cash transaction.<sup>538</sup>

What was perhaps a not uncommon commercial transaction is, characteristically, transposed into a theological metaphor. This, in Isaiah 43:3-4, YHWH offers other peoples in exchange for Israel, in order to emancipate Israel.<sup>539</sup>

Both of these elements are present in one of the most well-known of God's salvation acts – the freeing of the Israelite slaves from Egypt.<sup>540</sup> From here on the "exodus established an archetypical role for Yahweh as Israel's God"<sup>541</sup> and the event is echoed in other saving acts and in the writings of the people. The other climactic event was the return from exile in Babylon which may be thought of as a second Exodus. Isaiah was a key prophet who spoke of this time – his name means "Jehovah is salvation."<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Brueggemann, Walter *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002 p163.

<sup>535</sup> Brueggemann *Reverberations* p163.

<sup>536</sup> Segal, Alan *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986 p61.

<sup>537</sup> Exodus 13:13-15; 34:20.

<sup>538</sup> Brueggemann *Reverberations* p164.

<sup>539</sup> Brueggemann *Reverberations* p164.

<sup>540</sup> Exodus 6:6-7 and Deuteronomy 7:8.

<sup>541</sup> Allen, Leslie C. *A Theological Approach to the Old Testament: Major Themes and New Testament Connections* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014. (Google e-book section The Sinai Covenant.)

<sup>542</sup> Jensen, Irving L. *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament* Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1978 p326.

The people of Israel called on God to rescue them from oppression and their enemies, but their expectations were also that God would rescue them from sin.<sup>543</sup>

Isaiah prophesying the return from exile talks explicitly about good news, for example,

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"<sup>544</sup>

Following on the key events of the Exodus and the return from exile, we understand the Jewish expectation that God would also deliver them from the oppressors of the New Testament era and that Isaiah's words had not been fully realised.

Israelite history is mythical in the further sense that it sees the past as a paradigm for the present. Past events are consciously used as liturgical models for the covenantal meaning of human destiny. For instance, the entire people, whether they actually came from Egypt or only knew of the story, took the event of the Exodus to be a metaphor of going from slavery to becoming a people with a destiny and a purpose.<sup>545</sup>

It is in this light that we read the disciples asking Jesus before his ascension if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel.<sup>546</sup>

*"I see - with this historical background to the quest for salvation, Paul describing himself as dedicated to God's great announcement of salvation in Jesus invited people like me to find out more. We still want to be a people with a destiny and a purpose!" said Miriam.*

## **7.4 Afrikaner**

### **7.4.1 Religion and Identity**

As we look for some way of understanding the concept of gospel in the Afrikaner history, we look first for a problem from which they felt a need to be saved.

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<sup>543</sup> Psalm 93:8, Ezekiel 36:29, Allen, Leslie *Major Themes* np.

<sup>544</sup> Isaiah 52:7.

<sup>545</sup> Segal, Alan *Rebecca's Children* p12.

<sup>546</sup> Acts 1:6.

We note that a reliance on Calvinism was probably not something that came with the Dutch settlers into Southern Africa.<sup>547</sup> Rather it was something that was appropriated when it became useful and necessary to the Afrikaner identity, as we shall see.

Bosch tells us that early in the nineteenth century the Afrikaner was under threat – due to conflict over resources - from the indigenous isiXhosa people on one side and the British settlers on the other. This resulted in the Voortrekkers heading into the interior of the country and was a step along the way to establishing the people's identity as Afrikaners.<sup>548</sup>

At the end of the century, the war with the British cemented this formation of identity. When the Afrikaners lost the war, the shared grief and the realisation that they could have been annihilated created a determination to preserve the Afrikaner nation.<sup>549</sup>

*“Ok, so this need for self-perpetuation, this desperate need for preservation – that is the problem that needs solving? That was the state where they found themselves that required good news or gospel? I can go along with that,” said Elmarie, taking a personal interest in her Afrikaner forebears.*

This need found the people rebuilding the memory of the so-called Battle of Blood River and of the Day of the Covenant which commemorated their victory at that battle. In time these celebrations came to be held over an ever widening geographical area and became a cohesive force amongst the Afrikaner people.<sup>550</sup>

And so, after the war, says Bosch, “In this, the Afrikaner's darkest hour, it was above all the Afrikaans Reformed Churches that rallied to the people's aid and identified with their struggle. . . . It became virtually impossible to distinguish between church and nation. One of the purest forms of civil religion was beginning to take shape.”<sup>551</sup> This civil religion functioned as saving grace or gospel for the Afrikaner.

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<sup>547</sup> Bosch, D. J. “The Roots and Fruits of Afrikaner Civil Religion” in *New Faces of Africa* Pretoria: UNISA, 1984 p18.

<sup>548</sup> Bosch, D.J. “The Roots and Fruits” p21.

<sup>549</sup> Bosch, D.J. “The Roots and Fruits” p22.

<sup>550</sup> Bosch, D.J. “The Roots and Fruits” p24.

<sup>551</sup> Bosch, D.J. “The Roots and Fruits” p23.

Bosch suggests three particular influences on the shape of this civil religion.<sup>552</sup> The first was a sort of pietism which was brought by some of the pastors and missionaries. This laid an emphasis on the believer's individual relationship with God and had little to say about relationships with other people. This gave religion a private character, allowing public life to be influenced more by other factors.

The second was Dutch Calvinism. We have seen already how this encouraged isolation in order to retain purity. In the South African situation, this became isolation of the Afrikaner group rather than of the Christian group, and the isolation was not so much for mission, as for the survival of the nation. This desire for isolation developed into Afrikaner nationalism.

The third was Neo-Fichtean ideas which came out of Germany and were the inspiration for Nazism. These laid an emphasis on the unity of the community and the priority of the community in all things. "In the 1930s and 1940s the conviction grew that the ethnic purity of a nation had a metaphysical base. It was, therefore, divinely ordained and commanded. It is in this kind of thinking that the religious roots of the law prohibiting inter-racial marriage are to be found."<sup>553</sup>

*"So for them – perhaps I should say for us? For us, the good news or the gospel consisted of these philosophies which confirmed the Afrikaner identity. It so-happened that these also encouraged paying little attention to people outside of the nation," Elmarie summarised.*

#### 7.4.2 Apartheid – pseudo-gospel, white survival and justice

Under apartheid, the gospel as understood by the Afrikaner became so mingled with the ideology of apartheid that it became difficult to separate the two. Dwight Hopkins describes Allan Boesak's insight into this,

Boesak vehemently opposes apartheid because of its sham, pseudo-gospel façade. Wrapped in the theological mantle of scripture, apartheid originated in the white NGK; the NGK leadership proposed apartheid to the government as a cultural way of life and political policy. Boesak insightfully describes this insidious apartheid-gospel connection:

Apartheid is more than an ideology, more than something that has been thought up to form the content of a particular political policy. Apartheid is

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<sup>552</sup> Bosch, D.J. "The Roots and Fruits" p25-32.

<sup>553</sup> Bosch, D.J. "The Roots and Fruits" p32.

also pseudo-gospel. It was born in the church . . . The struggle against apartheid . . . is, therefore more than merely a struggle against an evil ideology.<sup>554</sup>

How this came about was through self-interest and the desire to provide for the future of the Afrikaner people. Giliomee says, “The peculiar feature of apartheid as an ideology was its attempt to reconcile the demands for white survival and justice.”<sup>555</sup> The attempt to hold the two together is what resulted in the pseudo-gospel, so detested by Allan Boesak. Furthermore, Giliomee describes the struggles and debates leading to apartheid and concludes:

Looking back on these debates many years later, a leading figure in the DRC stated that the church had been faced with the following question: ‘How can the church maintain our own people’s identity without doing damage to the cause of spreading the gospel among non-whites?’ His reply was: ‘The answer came out of our missions policy’. As the historian Richard Elphick remarks, the church leaders were enthralled by their utopian vision of separate peoples, each with their own mission, and would continue to justify the unjustifiable, thus paving the way for the politicians.<sup>556</sup>

Abraham Kuyper has been credited with providing a theological backing that influenced the development of apartheid. Douglas Bax, who was influential in bringing the injustice of apartheid to the fore in the Presbyterian Church says:

Kuyper’s theology of culture and *volk* opened the way for Romantic nationalism in its German form, which was becoming fused with racism (and anti-semitism), to penetrate the thinking of Afrikaner intellectuals.<sup>557</sup>

Other theological influences at the time were Andrew Murray and Karl Barth.<sup>558</sup>

*“What started as probably an honest attempt to meet both self-interest and social conscience became a monster,” said Elmarie. “A genuine concern for the needs of*

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<sup>554</sup> Hopkins, Dwight N. *Black Theology USA and South Africa* p104.

<sup>555</sup> Giliomee, Hermann *The Afrikaners* p461.

<sup>556</sup> Giliomee, Hermann *The Afrikaners* p463. He refers to Elphick, Richard “Missions and Afrikaner Nationalism: Soundings in the Pre-history of Apartheid” in *Missions, Nationalism and the End of Empire* (ed. B. Stanley) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

<sup>557</sup> Bax, Douglas S. *A Different Gospel : A Critique of the Theology Behind Apartheid* Presbyterian Church of S.A., 1979 p31.

<sup>558</sup> Lubbe , Jan “‘Half-known’: A Perspective on a Contentious Phase in the Reception of Abraham Kuyper in South Africa, 1960-1990” in *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990* (ed. Marry-Anne Plaatjies-Van Huffel & Robert Vosloo) Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2013 p185.



*people who were different degenerated into a degrading, dehumanising system, where it was possible to worship Jesus and simultaneously to insist on the humiliation of others by not allowing them to join in the worship because of their ethnic origins.”*

*“I’m not sure that the word gospel would really have been received as ‘good news’ under the influences we have seen in these sections,” she added.*

The message of Calvinism, as we have seen, which promised an uncertain salvation and a desperate need for self-effort in order to possibly make it at the end; this emphasis on self-reliance combined with the challenges of a growing and learning indigenous population and the need to somehow survive and be ‘good’ were demanding. It is perhaps no wonder that some who lived in this paradigm did not cope well. For example, later Afrikaner separatist leader Eugene Terreblanche of whom his BBC obituary said, “Terreblanche seemed to walk a tightrope between racist menace and national joke.”<sup>559</sup>

## **7.5 African**

### **7.5.1 Traditional – hungry ancestors and enemas**

Traditional Africans did not know the word gospel, as such, so again we consider unpacking its meanings in another way.

*“Just like the others, I guess that this will be a subjective choice and there will be those who would choose other aspects of African tradition to provide a different angle?” suggested Thembi.*

For this study, I have chosen one aspect of life for which traditional Africans wanted good news – or even salvation. This was in the situations where they believed that their ancestors (dead, but still living), known as *idlozi* (plural *amadlozi*) among the Zulu people, were causing illness or misfortune.

*“That is a real problem!” said Thando. “Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”*

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<sup>559</sup> BBC Obituary Terreblanche <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3797797.stm> 2010 accessed 21 November 2014.

*“And we don’t talk about it in public much. Not in English. You must know that we will only see glimpses here,” said Thembi.*

Karen Flint says:

When illnesses, with the exception of genetic ones, lasted for an inordinate amount of time or did not respond to the usual remedies, other causes, namely ancestors or witchcraft were suspected. . . Because slaughtering was such a common request for appeasing the ancestors, bouts of family illness were often described by saying that the ancestors were hungry.<sup>560</sup>

Eleanor Ross has done research into understandings of healing and illness in various South African cultural groups. These old beliefs are still very much part of South African experience today,

Many of the Black South African healers ascribed hearing loss to the ancestors – deceased relatives who are believed to be supernatural beings. The ancestors are generally benevolent and look after the interests of their descendants, but can also bring misfortune if the living descendants do not perform the necessary customary rituals (Ellis, 1992). For example, one participant stated: “If the ancestors get cross, they can put a sharp noise in the ear and it can damage the eardrum.”<sup>561</sup>

*“Don’t you have a story about that?” asked Thando.*

*“Yes, I do!”*

When I was sent with a group to visit house to house in a very rural area near Alexandria in the Eastern Cape in 2009 we visited a particular home and prayed with the large group of people gathered there. Afterwards as we were leaving one of the men who had not wanted to be involved caught up with me and pointed to the skulls and shrine ornaments next to the house. “What does Jesus think about this?” he wanted to know. Caught off guard, I answered that Jesus was more powerful than any ancestral spirit and that he could be relied on to protect us. The man nodded, as if I had said the right thing, and returned to the house.

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<sup>560</sup> Flint, Karen *Healing Traditions: African Medicine, Cultural Exchange, and Competition in South Africa, 1820-1948* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009 p57-58.

<sup>561</sup> Ross, Eleanor “Traditional Healing in South Africa” in *Social Work in Health Care*, 15-33, 46:2, 2007 p23. She quotes Ellis, C. “Ukufa Ukwaba” in *South African Family Practice*, 10, 105-106, 1996.

*"I think that he wanted to know that you took seriously what he took seriously and which was a major component of his life," said Thando.*

*"Yes, I think so too."*

The traditional solution to the problems caused by the ancestors is to call in a traditional healer. Adam Ashforth describes two types of practitioner in this context.<sup>562</sup> First, there is the *sangoma*. The *sangoma* performs by means of drums, dancing, trances, spirit possession and sacrificial rituals. Their ceremonies are dramatic and may be unnerving for the uninitiated.

The *inyanga* is the traditional healer who actually does most of the work of healing. They learn their art from long apprenticeships or, supposedly, the ancestors. They are experts at making *muthi* (meaning herbs or medicine or even poison.)

While there are certain conventional techniques of healing (purgation, enemas, steaming, incising, and bloodletting being the most common) and conventions of applying particular commonplace herbs to treat certain ailments (about four hundred herbs are commonly available in the commercial *muthi* market; Mander 1998), most of the *inyanga*'s knowledge, particularly when it comes to treating major illness and "evil forces," is secret and jealously guarded. When asked the source of his recipes, almost without exception an *inyanga* will state: "My ancestors."<sup>563</sup>

Rae Graham is a British woman who trained to become a traditional healer in South Africa. Rajendra Cale quotes her in an article:

The bad bits are the enemas. There is a belief that if you are possessed below the waist anywhere, it is a spirit that's causing your problem, whether it's a psychological problem or even an economic one. So you've got to get rid of that possession. And they do it with enemas. There are various kinds. They take that yellow and black beetle, which eats your roses, and they bake those and make a powder and make an enema of them.<sup>564</sup>

There are many uses of *muthi*. It can supposedly be used to cure any disease and to recover from any accident, it can provide protection against burglars, keep a

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<sup>562</sup> Ashforth, Adam *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 p55.

<sup>563</sup> Ashforth, Adam *Witchcraft* p56. He quotes Mander, Myles *Marketing of Indigenous Medicinal plants in South Africa: A Case Study in Kwazulu-Natal* Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1998.

<sup>564</sup> Kale, R "Traditional healers in South Africa: a Parallel Health Care System" in *BMJ : British Medical Journal* 1182-1185, 310, 1995 p1185.

spouse faithful, help children with exams and guarantee success at work. It can protect against both the police and criminals – although many people have regretted believing healers who promised bullets would turn to water. *Muthi* also engages with the spirit world, empowered by it and challenging demonic forces.<sup>565</sup>

While many western people call this superstition, it is taken very seriously by many black African people. To some the gospel is just another sort of witchcraft and is dealt with in the same way.

Others asserted that the *muthi* they were given did not work because they had not followed instructions to the letter or because their doubts rendered the *muthi* ineffective. For instance, at the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG), a PCC boasting a large local membership, pastors blessed lottery tickets to ensure their followers' prosperity. Many township residents declared that they were 'taking a chance' (Van Wyk 2012) on the church's charms and holy oils and knew that their remedies and consultations were dependent on a concentrated willingness to believe in their efficacy.<sup>566</sup>

*"So many white people telling these stories. They are obviously very interested," said Carol uncertainly.*

*"Like I said, we don't talk about it much," said Thembi, "to outsiders." She looked away.*

### 7.5.2 Black Consciousness – reclaiming the gospel, Moses, Jesus

We saw earlier how Allan Boesak claimed that apartheid had been melded with the gospel of Jesus to make a pseudo-gospel. Here he states what the aims of Black Theology in the context of the struggle were:

In this involvement Black Theology seeks the God of the Bible who is totally different from the god whites have for so long preached to them. The God of the Bible is the God of liberation rather than oppression; a God of justice, rather than injustice; a God of freedom and humanity rather than enslavement and subservience; a God of love, righteousness and brotherhood rather than hatred, self-interest and exploitation. Black Theology knows that it is not only people who need to be liberated. Also the gospel, so abused and exploited

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<sup>565</sup> Ashforth, Adam *Witchcraft* p135.

<sup>566</sup> Van Wyk, Illana "Bad Luck, Slippery Money and the South African Lottery" in *Qualitative Research in Gambling: Exploring the Production and Consumption of Risk* (ed. Rebecca Cassidy et al) London: Routledge, 2013 p160. She quotes van Wyk, I. "Tata Ma Chance: On Contingency and the Lottery in Post-Apartheid South Africa" in *Africa* 82(1):41-68, 2012.

needs to be liberated. In this liberation movement black Christians are fearfully and joyfully engaging themselves.<sup>567</sup>

He is clear that the revisioned gospel was not to be an equally exclusive or oppressive one:

In this sense, Black theology is not an exclusive, theological apartheid in which whites have no part. On the contrary, blacks know only too well the terrible estrangement of white people; they only too well know how sorely whites need to be liberated – even if whites themselves don't! In the words of Ananias Mpunz: Black Theology is a passionate call to freedom and although it directs its voice to black people, it nonetheless hopes that white people will hear and be saved.<sup>568</sup>

But Boesak was also aware that reclaiming the gospel was going to be a process of confrontation and that change would not come easily,

But then – and this is inevitable – comes the confrontation with the powers that be. If people are being changed, if the structures of the world are being confronted, if the very world itself is faced with the challenge to be transformed, then no longer hatred, but love shall rule, no longer fear but boldness shall rule, no longer injustice, but justice shall rule. Powers which are built upon injustice must be ended, but these powers get upset and disturbed, they get angry . . .<sup>569</sup>

During the struggle, a faith in the liberating God was preached boldly. The oppressed people identified with the Israelites who were slaves in Egypt and believed that God would send a Moses to lead them to freedom. This was a motif throughout the Black Consciousness Movement. This makes good material for passionate statements:

The diabolical status of colonisation and repression prevalent in South Africa cannot stand up against the force of God's movement and liberation. Our Christian faith in the God of the Exodus and the Resurrection knows no human bounds. As the apostle Paul asserts: If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31.)<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>567</sup> Boesak, Allan "Civil Religion and Black Community" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 19, 35-44 1977, p39.

<sup>568</sup> Boesak, Allan "Civil Religion" p44.

<sup>569</sup> Boesak, Allan "In the Name of Jesus: A Sermon for 16 June" in *When Prayer Makes News* (ed. Allan Boesak & Charles Villa Vicencio) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986 p31.

<sup>570</sup> Kunnie, Julian "Christianity, Black Theology and Liberatory Faith" in *The Unquestionable Right To Be Free* (ed. Itumeleng J. Mosala and Buti Tlhagale) Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1985 p162.

The journey of Jesus to the cross was also inspirational.

When blacks decided to become black and free in spite of opposition, even against opposition and continued the praxis of liberation, all kinds of intimidations ensued. Detentions, interrogations, tortures, bannings, house arrests, harassments and exile became the order of the day. . . No sooner had reflection centred on suffering than the 1976 Soweto – Cape Town uprising occurred. The killing of hundreds (800-1000) of black people in the struggle ushered in a new phase in the history of the project of liberation and of reflection on this project. The following of Jesus or discipleship had reached Golgotha.<sup>571</sup>

Thus not so much the form of the gospel, but the essence of the gospel – that God was and is a saving God – became a bastion of hope.

*“I believe that more than anything it gave people the ability to look up and out of their condition and see a vision for something better,” said Thembi.*

*“Yes, the word gospel, when freed from the shackles of apartheid and the resultant cynicism echoes with hope,” said Thando.*

### 7.5.3 Desmond Tutu – transforming, triumphant, penitent

To Desmond Tutu, a trained Anglican priest, the word gospel would have had a fairly orthodox meaning. He does seem to have invested large measures of his buoyant, yet determined, personality into his interpretation of the gospel. Hays Rockwell, quoted by John Allen, describes his experience of Tutu on a trip to America:

Just when you’re going to characterise him as this, that or the other, ideologically or in terms of churchmanship, he escapes such categories. He’s a deeply Catholic man in the sense that he’s inclusive, encompassing of the faith. He’s Anglo-Catholic, there’s no question, but he never would make that his primary way of addressing the church. He is able to proclaim the gospel with such energy because he believes in the evangelical mandate – not as an ideological thing but because that’s what his faith requires of him. He reaches into individual lives in a way that’s transformative. The range of his voice represents the range of his faith and his intellect. Very few evangelical preachers are as profoundly intellectual as he is, though he would scorn that word. His faith is beautifully informed by his learning, his knowledge.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> Mofokeng, Takatso A. *The Crucified* p36-37.

<sup>572</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p240. He quotes from an interview with Hays Rockwell.

Perhaps more than anything his faith was a triumphant and joyful one. He truly believed that God would overcome and that it was possible to rejoice in this already. An example of this is beautifully seen in an address he made regarding the Eloff Commission of enquiry into the SACC:

I said, hey, I belong to this divine, this supernatural organism, which includes the living in what we call the church militant, which includes the dead in what we call the church quiescent, which includes the saints in glory in what is called the church triumphant. So that although it is nonsense for the world, we can say in the central act of our worship, hey, we join with the angels and the archangels and the whole company of heaven . . . They can remove Desmond Tutu, they can remove the SACC, but the Church of God goes on.<sup>573</sup>

Desmond Tutu's gospel was not all happiness and escapism by any means. He had a firm grasp of the pain that people suffered. When advocating for reconciliation he had this to say:

He said that those responsible for apartheid first had to confess their sin: "Those who have wronged must be ready to say, 'We have hurt you by injustice, by uprooting you from your homes, by dumping you in poverty-stricken homeland resettlement camps, by giving your children inferior education, by denying your humanity and trampling down on your human dignity and denying your fundamental rights. We are sorry; forgive us'" In the second transaction, said Tutu, the victims were under a "gospel imperative" to forgive. In the third, those who had committed wrongs had to make restitution.<sup>574</sup>

## 7.6 My voice

### 7.6.1 Wesleyan Methodist – whole salvation and a warm heart

My understanding of gospel can be described in terms of beliefs, as is probably most appropriate for a thesis, but I would not be honest if I did not include the experiential and emotional components.

*"You may have been unfair to the other voices in denying them space for aspects which do not often appear in academic writing. This is a good reminder of the fact that our conversation is limited," observed Carol.*

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<sup>573</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p239.

<sup>574</sup> Allen, John *Desmond Tutu* p342.

The gospel of Jesus and his salvation are things that not only shape my life, but I believe have changed it in a fundamental way. They allow me to experience God and to have a strong suspicion that he is real and present, even when many around me deny this. There are many times when I have to rethink and ask myself if I am sure, but this is what it means to me. John Wesley's famous words open a window onto the experiential nature of this belief,

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.<sup>575</sup>

As a summary of belief, the "Four alls" attributed to John Wesley's theology do very well.<sup>576</sup>

*"This is what all the kids learn at Confirmation! It is good to remember," said Carol.*

### ***All people need to be saved***

Wesleyans believe that the Bible teaches that all men and women are sinners who have "fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Wesley's sense of his own sin and alienation from God gave a focus to his theology. Because of this state of sin, no one is able to save themselves.

### ***All people can be saved***

If we cannot save ourselves, salvation must be a gift of God, but God is unwilling to force that gift on us.

Here Wesley differed from Reformers such as John Calvin seeing God's grace as, first of all, setting the human will free in order to allow the individual the space to accept or reject God's offer of salvation (sometimes referred to as Prevenient grace).<sup>577</sup>

Salvation is available to all who choose to accept the free gift of God and he enables all to make that choice.

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<sup>575</sup> Wesley, John *An extract of ... John Wesley's journal from February 1, 1737-8, to his return from Germany* Felix Farley (printer), 1743 p30

<sup>576</sup> See for example [www.irishmethodist.org](http://www.irishmethodist.org).

<sup>577</sup> [www.irishmethodist.org](http://www.irishmethodist.org)



### ***All people can know they are saved***

We can know that we are saved because we believe that God has promised it and so if we have turned to him we are saved. Wesley taught that we are able to have not only an intellectual understanding of this but also an inner conviction, given by the Holy Spirit, that we are saved. At the end of his life he softened his attitude saying that this conviction was not necessary to salvation, but was available to all who believed.

### ***All people can be saved to the uttermost***

This draws from Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection. This does not imply that we are able to attain a state where we are infallible, but rather a state where our every intention and conscious action is according to what we believe is right in God's eyes. Wesley also called it a state of perfect love – for both God and neighbour. Not all are expected to attain to this.

#### 7.6.2 Modified Existentialist – think and overthink

My inclination is to save myself. I prefer to be independent, so choosing to submit myself to God is something that I need to do on an ongoing basis. Having done it for so long, it is now a habit.

*“Do you ever question it?” asked Carol.*

I do, from time to time. I ask whether my faith is ‘real’ or just the product of habit. It may be seen that I have a tendency to be sceptical!

So I analyse the idea of gospel until I have turned it inside out. When a new idea comes along I examine it, question it, and change my thinking where necessary. Thus my understanding of the gospel is the product of many years of thinking and reading.

Reluctantly, I admit that I see the gospel as being about me. I need to expand my thinking consciously to include you and the community in general.

*“Please include me,” joked Carol.*

I believe, because the gospel makes sense to me. My belief is encouraged when I see people whose thinking I respect think the same as me.

*“Hooray – that’s me. I think like you do,” said Carol, not too sycophantically.*

I value the inner conviction that I experience, because it helps when I doubt myself intellectually. It creates another directional ray which helps me triangulate to the point of truth. I am grateful for the Bible which provides a foundation for understanding, even if I have to admit that I am treating its contents as axiomatic.

I value the gospel because I believe it contains the essence of truth.

In the same way, I value science and the pursuit of knowledge and proving whether things are true or not.

*“Before you go on, we just want to warn you about something,” said Carol.*

*“Yes,” said Thando. “There are other Conceptual Blenders coming in – some of them wouldn’t like you speaking with ‘our’ voice. Some of them are rougher and tougher.”*

*“That’s all good – I’m ready - let’s see what is up next!”*

## **7.7 An interlude of thought**

*“I can’t wait to see what is happening now. I bet it’s got more exciting!” said the hidden observer.*

*“That lever you pulled did take some of the simplifications out of the blend!” agreed the author. “I hope you like the result. Let’s have a look. It was just time for the lunch break, so we will find them all in the canteen.”*

The canteen was quite small, with just three tables seating six people each. There was a long counter that separated the kitchen from the eating area. The door to the kitchen was in the centre of the counter. At the far side, a big Afrikaner woman was busy setting out snacks on serving plates on the counter. The delicacies such as *koeksisters* and *vetkoek* looked homemade. In the canteen area, a white man with a camera hung back. Three Greek or Roman people were clustered around one of the tables talking in low voices. A young black man stood at the far side of the canteen looking at the pictures on the walls.

The woman in the kitchen seemed to complete her work and called out to the others in a loud voice. The Englishman with the camera looked up and started ambling towards her. An elderly black man who had just entered walked haltingly

towards her as well. The people in the cluster around the table looked confused and were questioning each other. The woman called again, gesturing to the plates.

“I don’t think they understand Afrikaans,” said the Englishman with a smile. “They must be foreigners.”

“Come and get some food,” called the Afrikaner and the Englishman gestured to the group with his arm. They stood and moved to the counter, but were still clearly unable to understand.

*“What happened to them all talking English? This is just going to be a shambles!”*

*“You wanted to pull the lever! Language can’t just be passed over . . . Our Greek and Roman friends have a lingua franca,<sup>578</sup> but in South Africa language was often a barrier. Now they are caught up in the same paradigm”*

The Englishman picked up a plate and offered it to the approaching foreigners. They tentatively helped themselves nodding their thanks. The woman nodded back. The old man, slightly built and a little stooped had reached the counter. He was examining the contents of one of the plates. As he reached out to help himself the woman noticed him and burst out in a flood of language, shouting and angry. The man jumped back.

“You can’t eat that. It’s for the white people. Your food is in the kitchen. If you had touched that I would have had to throw away the whole plate. Go into the kitchen!”

The man stooped even more into a bow and shuffled into the kitchen. He helped himself from a plate there and sat down to eat by himself.

*“Eish.<sup>579</sup> I’d forgotten what it was like. What are our Greek and Roman friends going to think?”*

*“Maybe not as much as you would expect. Look over there.”*

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<sup>578</sup> Porter, Stanley E. *Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research* London: A&C Black, 2004 p169. He recommends Vorster, Willem S. *Speaking of Jesus : Essays on Biblical Language, Gospel Narrative and the Historical Jesus* (ed. J.E. Botha) Leiden: Brill, 1999 p29.

<sup>579</sup> An African language exclamation.

Not all the 'foreigners' had stepped forward to get food. One had moved away from the others and settled at a table on his own. He drew a parcel out of his pocket and opened it up. He had brought his own lunch. He muttered in a strange language and began to eat. He clearly would not welcome company.

The Englishman was looking very uncomfortable. He tried a few words with the Afrikaner woman, but she was clearly very upset and not willing to listen. He took a snack and started into the kitchen. The man was huddled at the table picking at his food.

"Sorry," the Englishman muttered. The black man did not look up and said something he could not understand. "I beg your pardon?" But he still could not catch the reply.

The Greeks or Romans were back at their table, sharing their meal. The Englishman approached them. "Sorry," he said again and shook his head. The others looked up and smiled, clearly inviting him to sit. He did so, slowly.

After a while he pointed to the man who was sitting by himself in the canteen and looked a question.

The others said something that sounded like 'Yuda'. The look on the Englishman's face was blank. 'Yuda', they kept saying.

"Judah? Oh, he is Jewish. I get it, so he won't eat with us." He looked at the man in the kitchen, forced into isolation and then at the Jew, who chose isolation. He shook his head.

*"This is very awkward. How can these people ever get along?"*

*"Sh. Wait. You haven't been watching the other man."*

*"What other man?"*

*"The one at the other end of the room who was looking at the pictures."*

*"What did he do?"*

*"He took out his pocket knife, and seemed to balance it in his hand. Then he shook his head and put it away again. Watch!"*

*"No, now I'm scared. Let's pull the lever back."*

*“You can’t change the past. What must happen will happen here too.”*

The black man from the far corner now moved towards the food. “Thank you,” he said to the woman, “this looks very good.”

“No,” she shouted, “yours is in the kitchen!”

“The time is coming when you will not shout at a black man like this. We know that we are also children of God. I ask you please to share your food.” He reached out and took a *koeksister*. The woman shuddered, took the plate away, and put it in the kitchen where the elderly man was sitting.

“You have made it dirty now – go and eat it.”

“I will not be treated as if I am dirty!” The man hit out and knocked the plate onto the floor with a crash. He reached out and helped the elderly man to his feet as the others backed off in fear.

Even those seated in the canteen backed off and stood by the walls. There was silence for a moment.

The image of a glowing cross rose out of the ground in the centre of the room. The Greeks, Romans and the Jew backed into a corner in horror.

But the Englishman seemed to be drawn to the cross. So did the Afrikaner and the two black men. They came forward, knelt, and seemed to pray. The younger black man was too restless to stay kneeling. He leapt up and came to the cross, seeming unsure of what he wanted to do. He stared at it and then picked it up and marched slowly off, holding it like a standard. He glanced at the older man, drawing him along with his eyes. The Englishman followed with his camera, almost strolling in his casualness. The Afrikaner woman was torn. She wanted to go and she wanted to stay, but decided to follow, keeping well back.

The people from the past stayed in their corner until the others were gone. They began to discuss these events in low tones.

*“That got a bit more dramatic! Why didn’t the Graeco-Romans follow the cross? Are they not Christians?”*

*“Yes they are, but they are a bit closer to it than we are. Remember that they have seen people hanging on crosses by the side of the road.”*

*“They were afraid?”*

*“Yes, I would think so. The symbol that united the South Africans, albeit weakly, alienated the people from the past.”*

*“So language divided – but also united. At least some of them tried to communicate. But the symbol that should have united also caused division. Interesting.”*

*“Yes, and it has all raised an important question.”*

*“What is that?”*

*“Will the South Africans stay together?”*

*\*\**

*“What happened to the languages? It was better when they could communicate. What lever do we need to pull to fix it?”*

*“A very important technique in creating conceptual blends is compression. What happened was that we removed the compression that created a unique language out of many.”*

*“Compression? Could you explain a little?”*

*“Do you remember what we said about achieving human scale? Compression is one of the ways that we do this.”*

*“Whoa, I need to think about this. But I get what you are saying about human scale. These groups that we are watching are much easier to comprehend than the vast sweep of history and also the geographical location that are being dealt with in the thesis.”*

*“Yes, exactly, you’ve got it! Two of the compressions in these blends are time and space. People separated by thousands of years are represented as meeting each other. People separated by thousands of kilometres are represented as being in the same room. When they spoke the same language, that was a compression of many languages to one unique language. Another compression that we see is whole races or nationalities or people groups being reduced to one or two individuals.”*

*“You would think it would become simplistic.”*

*“Sometimes it is. We keep creating blends and looking at what comes out until we find one that speaks to us – that begins to give the ‘global insight’ mentioned in the goals above.”*

## **7.8 Critical Analysis**

### **7.8.1 The blend**

I found that the previous blends were a little insipid. They were struggling to get beyond a gentle flow of thoughts – my thoughts. For this reason, I introduced more defined – stereotyped – characters. I also thought it would be interesting to see what happened if I removed one of the compressions, so I took out the common language. This resulted in the action being dominated by the South African group which was probably because I was thinking in a language they would understand. The people of the first century group were reduced to anonymity and mumbles and showed little character.

As well as being aware of the question about diverse people living together, I was conscious of the question of what constitutes ‘gospel’ or ‘good news’ to people. I think this conflict is what ultimately caused the situation to become violent. As before, I peopled the scene and allowed it to play out in as evolutionary way as was possible.

When all seemed to be chaos, I felt the need to jump in and save the situation. I thought I would do it by introducing the ‘real’ gospel, thinking somewhat naively that this would resolve it. This is when the cross magically appeared and it did bring some resolution, but it became clear that it also caused division.

### **7.8.2 The text**

In dealing with the word ‘gospel’, we have maintained a determined ignorance of the depth of meaning associated with the word. We could have called in the whole New Testament and created for ourselves a theology and a meaning for gospel. By maintaining this ignorance we have left space for the other voices to speak and to offer different possibilities. There are three key aspects which are suggested by the fusion of the voices.

What strikes me most from this blend is the two alienated men. The elderly black man was chased off into a corner to eat by himself. The Jew chose to eat by himself. Both people would have been despised in their own contexts. The black man would have been oppressed by apartheid, the Jew by his poverty and lack of alliances with the Roman rulers. The Jew, however, was not thrown out but rather chose to withdraw. He kept for himself dignity and a sense of power over others as he would not allow them to eat with him. The black man, though, was without dignity and did nothing to preserve himself in his situation – or so it appears. The Jew already had good news. Even without Jesus, the Jewish ‘gospel’ was good news that gave meaning and dignity to life. For the black person under apartheid there was no good news. Even the good news of Jesus had been subverted and made into a means of oppression. For this reason the black people had to make their own good news and out of this came Black Consciousness. It was Black Consciousness that told the black person he had dignity and that he was worthwhile. These ideas reinforce the Roman message of the gospel as freedom, justice, peace and salvation as well as being consistent with what we have seen of Paul’s intention. So, firstly, by ‘gospel’ he is communicating hope in the midst of oppression.

Secondly, we see that in the Afrikaner tradition the civil religion that developed and was in a sense their gospel was a rallying point which helped preserve the Afrikaner identity. Similarly, the ideologies of Black Consciousness became a means of maintaining the black identity. We know that the gospel was central to the preservation of the Christian community and of the Christian identity. Thus, we may see ‘gospel’ as not just a message or a set of beliefs but as a means of preservation for a new community.

Thirdly, we may debate whether Paul intended to challenge the Roman authorities outright, but we hear from our other voices that confrontation was inevitable. Black Consciousness could not triumph without confrontation with the white government. The Jews could not triumph over Egypt with confrontation with Pharaoh. The traditional African could not triumph without confrontation with evil spirits and demonic forces, through *muthi* and the actions of *sangomas* and *inyangas*. We see, then, that Paul must have known that ‘gospel’ could not be hope in the midst of oppression without confrontation with the ruling powers.



If Paul is saying all of this – that gospel means the preservation of community, hope in oppression and confrontation with rulers – then without even knowing the content of ‘gospel’ we see depth to what Paul is saying. The Methodist ‘four alls’ may ring hollow when seen alongside these.

I suggested in the introduction to this section that the word gospel was loaded with meaning – that there was more to it than was obvious. Paul spoke often of the mysteries with which he was entrusted. I suspect that people were waiting with expectation to hear where Paul was going to lead them. The announcement, then, really was new. We need to be careful when we read the word gospel, in Romans, not to load it with all of our understandings based on many years of accumulated meaning. It might be best to read the word as a bowl ready to be poured out – or a proclamation yet to be fully made. A cross lifted up and carried off . . .

## CHAPTER EIGHT: BEFOREHAND

### 8.1 Introduction

***“which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,” Romans 1:2***

The fourth theme that we pick up is that of the significance of the past and continuation with the past. This phrase qualifies the ‘gospel of God’ in the last section.

*“This is quite a long phrase. Are we going to do it word by word?” asked Phoebe.*

*“Surely not,” answered Miriam, “we have already touched on prophets. The idea of the past and its interactions with the future fascinates me, though. Your past and my past are so different.”*

*“And yet, in all probability, our futures will be similar,” agreed Phoebe.*

From the outline:

[which he promised  
beforehand  
through his prophets  
in the holy scriptures,]

Here our primary word – or words – will be ‘promised beforehand’. We will look at these words and their level one meaning – in particular where looking at the Greek. These words resonate with our question ‘How can diverse people live together well’ as we are aware that much of our diversity as people comes from our past. Thus when referring to the other voices we generalise to ‘things that were beforehand’ in order to examine the pasts of the different contexts. We look to take rich meaning out of the word which suggests that we are operating both on level one and on level three. We will occasionally acknowledge the context of ‘through his prophets’ and ‘in the holy scriptures’ as level two reading, but will not dig into level one understandings of these phrases.

We will do matrixing in the Hebrew section with questions raised by the level three reading. One of these questions is as to why Paul did not give his own genealogy in this letter. Other material will be drawn in to make sense of this. The

other matrixing will be to enlarge on particular Jewish sensitivities coming from the rituals of the Law.

*“Paul obviously was also aware of different pasts. Let’s see what he was doing here!” said Miriam.*

## 8.2 Graeco-Roman

### 8.2.1 ὁ προεπηγγείλατο διὰ τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις

We will focus particularly on προεπηγγείλατο, which comes from προεπαγγέλλω, meaning announce beforehand.<sup>580</sup> The word is found in the middle voice indicating that this announcement was on God’s own behalf<sup>581</sup> and also the passive sense so we have the gospel which was announced or promised.<sup>582</sup> The emphasis on God’s own behalf is reinforced by the phrase ‘his prophets’ (τῶν προφητῶν αὐτοῦ) – God’s prophets - which is unusual in the New Testament.<sup>583</sup> This reference to an apparent body of holy writings (ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις) is unique in the New Testament and probably indicates that this language comes from Hebrew tradition and refers to the Old Testament.<sup>584</sup> “The effort to find common ground with conservative Jewish believers, who are being discriminated against in Rome, is signalled in these details.”<sup>585</sup> Schniewind and Friedrich observe that for God to make a promise to people was virtually unknown in Greek literature at the time,<sup>586</sup> making Paul’s claim unusual. Furthermore, the compound προεπαγγέλλω is unusual because ἐπαγγέλλω already contains the sense of a promise<sup>587</sup> and so the beforehand element is reinforced. The ‘why is this here’ question seems then to be answered ‘in order to provide continuity with the past.’<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* προεπαγγέλλω.

<sup>581</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 38 Romans 1-8* Dallas: Word, 1988 p10.

<sup>582</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* προεπαγγέλλω.

<sup>583</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

<sup>584</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

<sup>585</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

<sup>586</sup> Schniewind, Julius and Friedrich, Gerhard “ἐπαγγέλλω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume II* p578-579.

<sup>587</sup> Schniewind and Friedrich “ἐπαγγέλλω” p586.

<sup>588</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p 62.

*“Good! Let’s look then at the past, and how it has continuity into the present, within all the other contexts at which we are looking. We are so different from one another!”*

We see first, that Paul insisted that all cultures had what was required to prepare them for knowledge of God. In particular, in chapter 1 “the plural reference to humans in v. 18 allows no discrimination between persons and groups. In contrast to the antinomies of alleged superiority mentioned in vv. 14-16, the knowledge of God is available to all.”<sup>589</sup> Verse 20 sees Paul cleverly combining the Jewish notions of revelation and creation with the Graeco-Roman one (from the Stoic philosophers) of divinity visible in the natural world, leading on to the conclusion that people are without excuse.<sup>590</sup> The Greek word for being without excuse (here ἄ ἀπολογήτους) is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in Romans 2:1<sup>591</sup> where it furthers Paul’s argument – now urging people not to judge each other for their differences.

The thing with the past is that its effect does not stay in the past, but permeates the future. Thus we draw into our web and conversation a portion of Romans that deals with this interference of the past – in particular that people tend to judge each other for being different. In Romans 14 Paul unpacks what he begins to say in Romans 2:1 – we see the link in his use of the verb ‘to judge’ (κρίνειν).<sup>592</sup>

Paul having made his point about the acceptability of all, now deals with some practical matters.

*“While it may be relatively easy to dispense with judgement of another’s pre-Christian experience,” said Junia, “how does one not judge the ongoing behaviour of someone with different traditional rituals?”*

*“Good question,” replied Phoebe.*

Robert Jewett sees the problem as being an aspect of the Mediterranean honour and shame culture:

In 14:1-15:13, Paul counters the competition for honour between the Roman churches. His basic point is that to despise and judge fellow Christians is to lose sight of who the Lord is. If God has ‘welcomed’ one’s opponent (14:3) and if God is the one before whom competitors ‘stand or fall’ (14:5-6), then the

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<sup>589</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p153.

<sup>590</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p155&156.

<sup>591</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p156.

<sup>592</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p197.

continuation of hostilities constitutes an assault on God. ... His protection of the 'weak' is balanced by protecting the integrity of the strong (14:16). This is a revolutionary form of social tolerance that allows differences to stand while reaching out to accept others as equal members of the body of Christ. To build up 'one another' (14:19) clearly implies that both the weak and the strong are to undertake this task of edifying the other side.<sup>593</sup>

Once again, Paul is recommending that the starting point for co-operation should be to let go of being valued for our strengths and specialness.

"We all need to stand with the weak in a position of weakness," said Junia.

"The bottom line is that all Christians were to make an effort to get on together and not to allow convictions about rituals to divide them," continued Phoebe.

### 8.2.2 The Context – the fall of the gods

We examine some possible ways in which the past of the Romans and the Greeks may have prepared them for the coming of Jesus and his gospel. In particular, we mention the influence of Greek philosophy on the people's readiness for Jesus. Michael Green, in his book 'Evangelism in the Early Church' describes this influence neatly. Firstly, he mentions a preparedness to talk about theology based on the writing down of both Greek and Roman mythologies:

The poets were the theologians of the day; and the common people derived their conception of the gods and their activities from the Homeric sagas. Indirectly, therefore, this popularizing of theological mythology was a real preparation for the gospel. Thoughtful people reflected on the cruelties, adulteries, deceits, battles and lies attributed to the gods and they were repelled. It was not the Christians who first mounted an attack on the crude anthropomorphic polytheism of the masses. It had been exposed by Greek philosophers long before.<sup>594</sup>

Thus as the sagas were discussed and 'theologised over', there came to be doubt as to the usefulness of the Greek and Roman mythologies.

Plato led thinkers to question whether there were in fact many gods in his dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro. Here he has Socrates ask Euthyphro whether something is good because the gods decree it to be good or if the gods

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<sup>593</sup> Jewett, Robert "Romans" in *The Cambridge Companion to St Paul* (ed. James D.G. Dunn) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003 p103.

<sup>594</sup> Green, Michael *Evangelism in the Early Church* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004 p35.

decree something to be good because it is good. Euthyphro insists that it is because the gods decree it to be so and Socrates then asks how this can be if the gods squabble so much and have such different values. The logical resolution to this is that there can in fact be only one god so as to be a uniform notion of good.<sup>595</sup> This use of logic not only began to move the peoples' minds in a new direction but also established the disciplines of logic and rhetoric and other forms of argument which Paul himself makes use of in his speaking and writing.

Rigorous Greek thought, honest Greek seeking after truth made people impatient of the worthless deities they had traditionally worshipped. It has been well said of the Greeks that it was not that they became so depraved that they abandoned their gods, but rather that the gods became so depraved that they were abandoned by the people.<sup>596</sup>

Plato also introduced the idea of another state of being beyond that which is visible. The idea that this world that we see is not all that there is. The following extract from an introduction to Plato's Republic just gives a taste of this:

We are thus led on to the conception of a higher State, in which "no man calls anything his own," and in which there is neither "marrying nor giving in marriage," and "kings are philosophers" and "philosophers are kings" and there is another and higher education, intellectual as well as moral and religious, of science as well as of art, and not of youth only but of the whole life. Such a State is hardly to be realised in this world and would quickly degenerate.<sup>597</sup>

*"I think that the evolution of Greek and Roman society and thought has led to a receptivity to the things of Jesus. Certainly for me," said Phoebe.*

*"In particular I have become dissatisfied with the civic cult and I approve of the argument for embracing the idea of only one god," chimed in Junia.*

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<sup>595</sup> Plato *Platonis Euthyphro* (ed. J. Adam) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890 pxx.

<sup>596</sup> Green, Michael *Evangelism* p36.

<sup>597</sup> Plato *The Republic* Google eBook [online]  
[https://books.google.co.za/books?id=5pGoCgAAQBAJ&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](https://books.google.co.za/books?id=5pGoCgAAQBAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s) accessed 17 Oct 2015. From the introduction.

### 8.3 Hebrew

For the Jewish people continuation with the past was an important element in determining what they were willing to believe. When Paul says that Jesus is foretold in the holy writings he is using a weighty argument in his favour.<sup>598</sup>

*“We know that for the Hebrew people the ‘prophets and the holy writings’ are the Old Testament which recounts the past of the Israelites,” said Miriam.*

We pick up two interesting points to weave into our web.

#### 8.3.1 Paul does not give his own genealogy

The place of the recorded genealogy seen in the Old Testament continues to be seen in the New Testament with the two genealogies given for Jesus in the gospels of Luke and Matthew. Paul, however, does not give his own genealogy when writing to the Romans but rather appears to shift the emphasis to Jesus. He gives a powerful short biography of Jesus in verses 3 and 4, ultimately describing him as the son of God who rose again from the dead.

*“Why did Paul not include his own ethnicity in his introduction of himself, as we would expect?” asked Junia.*

*“He comes from a highly respectable lineage and it would give his words much authority if he were to quote it,” agreed Miriam.*

*“He has not kept it hidden elsewhere,<sup>599</sup> why is it not disclosed now in his introduction?” continued Phoebe.*

We see that later on in Romans he does mention his ancestry:

I ask then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>600</sup>

Here Paul fills the gap that we noticed, but in order to prove that God has not rejected all the Jews and uses himself as an example.<sup>601</sup>

*“That’s not really what we are looking for, is it?” asked Phoebe.*

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<sup>598</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

<sup>599</sup> Galatians 1:11-24; Philippians 3:4-7; 2 Corinthians 11:17-23.

<sup>600</sup> Romans 11:1.

<sup>601</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p653.

*“No. We would expect Paul to use his lineage upfront to show his legitimacy. This is more a defensive afterthought. Mind you, I would love to pursue that thread to show the important place that Jews still have.”<sup>602</sup> Maybe another time,” answered Miriam.*

The following passage comes from the second letter to the Corinthians and here Paul does give his lineage:

I repeat, let no one think me foolish; but even if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. (What I am saying I say not with the Lord's authority but as a fool, in this boastful confidence; since many boast of worldly things, I too will boast.) . . . But whatever any one dares to boast of – I am speaking as a fool – I also dare boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking as a madman. . .<sup>603</sup>

This passage comes in the context of Paul feeling himself compared to ‘super apostles’ and coming out inadequate. Thus on the one hand he is presenting his tribal line as a strength with which he is well able to compete with these other apostles. On the other hand, he invalidates this expression of his strength by frequently calling himself a fool for even mentioning it and boasts of things that would usually be considered weak. Watson suggests that he is participating in the Roman honour and shame culture and responding to the challenge that he is not quite good enough. His boasting seems to be half genuine and half parody:

Ironic boasting is not a strong, confrontational approach. It is a nonthreatening way for Paul to defend his honor without opening him up to criticism of the discrepancy between his strong letters and his weak presence. However, such boasting still allows Paul to defend himself and to shame the Corinthians into seeing that his honor has been unduly challenged and that his opponents have dishonoured the Corinthians as well.<sup>604</sup>

Perhaps, more than anything, Paul shows his understanding of what matters to his audience.

*“It goes against the grain for him to elevate himself by his heritage, but he does it, where necessary, for the sake of his audience. That makes sense,” said Junia.*

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<sup>602</sup> See for example Romans 9:1-5 and Romans 11:25-26.

<sup>603</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:17-23.

<sup>604</sup> Watson, Duane F. “Paul and Boasting” in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley) Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003 p94.



*“So we see in Romans 1 that Paul does value continuity with the past – but he does it through the antecedents of Jesus. The implication is that Paul’s authority is in Jesus and his relationship to him, rather than inherently in his own ancestry,” said Miriam.*

### 8.3.2 Areas particularly sensitive for Jewish people

The Jewish Law was the source of the rituals of the Jewish people. Craig Keener points out, “Gentiles, particularly in Rome, had long ridiculed Jewish people for their peculiarities.”<sup>605</sup> Paul picks out some aspects that may have been causing problems.

One believes he may eat anything, while the weak man eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him.<sup>606</sup>

One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honour of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honour of the Lord and gives thanks to God.<sup>607</sup>

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.<sup>608</sup>

The Jewish food laws, such as not eating pork and not eating any meat from which the blood had not been drained was one of the areas of difficulty, although, “Jewish people did not expect most Gentiles to observe their food laws or holy days but did expect Gentile converts to Judaism to do so, perhaps including Gentile Christians.”<sup>609</sup>

*“It isn’t fair how they bully us!” cried Miriam. “Our laws are important to us and we don’t impose them on others. Although some Jewish Christians do think Gentile*

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<sup>605</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* Downers Grove: IVP 2014, p451.

<sup>606</sup> Romans 14:2-3.

<sup>607</sup> Romans 14:5-6.

<sup>608</sup> Romans 14:14-15.

<sup>609</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary* p451.

*brothers and sisters should be like us – but there are so many Gentiles in the church!”*

Another feature of the Law was the celebration of festivals, the Sabbath and the making of sacrifices. “The precise time for festivals was such an important issue in Judaism that different Jewish groups broke fellowship with each other over the issue.”<sup>610</sup>

Another problem was Gentile meat, which may have been offered as a sacrifice to another god or which may not have had the blood correctly drained. Wine could also have been used as an offering to other gods.<sup>611</sup>

### 8.3.3 A response to these sensitive areas

*“Miriam, we don’t have as firmly enforced rituals as you do,” said Junia. Phoebe nodded agreement. “But we are sorry when people like us mock you.”*

Most distinct cultures in the ancient world had their own food customs; some philosophical schools also had their own food rules. But few cultures were as insistent as the Jewish people that a deity had assigned their food laws; in the two centuries before Paul many Jews had died for refusing to eat pork, a meat most Greeks thought delicious. (Others who abstained from pork included Phoenicians, some Syrians, Egyptian priests and the philosophic sect of the Pythagoreans who were vegetarian; Greeks looked down on some of these groups also.<sup>612</sup>

Although other cultures also had their festivals and their market days, none were held with as much commitment as the Jews held their festivals and Sabbaths – in fact many outsiders looked down at the Sabbath as an excuse for laziness.<sup>613</sup>

Robert Jewett notes that Paul does not seem to be concerned about particulars, but paints with a broad brush in order to encourage the people to accept a whole spectrum of different observances. His comparison of those who eat ‘anything’ to those who eat only vegetables (actually green leafy vegetable) is so simplistic as to be obvious that he is exaggerating:

In view of the cultural evidence, the likelihood of any group in Rome actually practising so extreme an asceticism is on the same level as to imagine a

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<sup>610</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary* p452.

<sup>611</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary* p452.

<sup>612</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary* p452.

<sup>613</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The Bible Background Commentary* p452.

group actually eating everything. The rhetorical effect of placing these parameters so far beyond the likely, actual behaviour of groups in Rome is to enable each group to smile and feel included in the subsequent argument. Since it is impossible to imagine any group in Rome that would not fit somewhere along the scale between the uncritical omnivores and the leaf mongers of Rom 14:2, Paul's argument becomes relevant for 'all positions within this range'.<sup>614</sup>

In a similar manner, Paul deals with the sacred days so that he is understood to be speaking generally and not in a way limited to particular situations:

While scholars have argued that Paul had in mind the early development of Sunday as the day of worship, the Jewish Sabbath, and/or the Jewish festivals, fast days, the lucky days of Greco-Roman astrological calculation, or Roman feast days, his generic formulation prevents a more precise determination of these alternatives. He may well have intended to address controversies concerning several of the above.<sup>615</sup>

*"So Paul was aware of real problems that the community was having, but chooses not to deal with each one specifically," said Junia.*

*"He rather suggests that these problems are only some of many that could arise," said Miriam. "I guess that is true. The Romans cause us some grief, we also cause each other grief sometimes too."*

The main point that he is making is that the groups need to be gentle with each other about these differences. Jewett says of Romans 14 that it "legitimizes a 'certain diversity of opinion and practice' and does not seek 'to erase subgroup identities.'"<sup>616</sup>

## 8.4 African

### 8.4.1 Tradition and Black Consciousness – dilemmas, reclaiming past and future

"In my view, the difficulty with understanding the history of African religion is that the first attempts to describe it were already made with an 'agenda'," stated Thando.

"African tradition was perpetuated orally and not graphically and thus there are no unchangeable records," continued Thembi.

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<sup>614</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p838.

<sup>615</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p844-845.

<sup>616</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p836.

Oral tradition mutates, as needed, which has its benefits, but does mean that it is difficult to know what was there before the mutation. Simon Gqubule said this:

We have no written records of the beliefs enshrined in African religion and no written records of their forms of worship. No doubt research could be done. Such research would have to examine carefully the various oral traditions and evaluate their authenticity. The oral traditions that are circulating at present are unreliable.<sup>617</sup>

Some of our understanding of African religion originates from western missionaries and settlers and was probably better labelled as 'misunderstanding'.

Olfert Dapper was thus expressing the view of many non-Africans when he wrote in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that "No one, however thoroughly he has enquired, has ever been able to find among all the Kaffirs or Hottentots or Beachrangers any trace of religion, or any show of honour to God or the Devil". This sentiment was echoed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by no less person than Robert Moffat when he declared that Satan "has employed his agency, with fatal success in erasing every vestige of religious impression from the minds of the Bechuanas, Hottentots and Bushmen; leaving them without a single ray to guide them from the dark and dread futurity, or a single link to unite them with the skies". One could produce a plethora of such quotations. The point I want to stress is that for most non-Africans, ours was the dark Continent – of course they were not to know that one day we would be chanting "black is beautiful."<sup>618</sup>

Peter Bolink contributes an explanation of why people might have thought like this – although he is himself not in agreement with this conception.

It was reasoned that because the African in the first place always sought help and favours from his ancestors for his daily needs, anxieties, sicknesses and defilements by appeasing them with sacrifices, libations and reverent attentions, it had been a logical development that in the process God had been moved almost totally to the background, or still better, far up in the sky becoming, in the end, unapproachable to the common people.<sup>619</sup>

These ideas were from western missionaries and settlers who looked for understandings of God which were similar to their own. Not finding them, they believed that God was not truly present in the indigenous belief systems. During the

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<sup>617</sup> Gqubule, Simon "What is Black Theology" p16-17.

<sup>618</sup> Tutu, Desmond "Some African Insights and the Old Testament" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 1, 16-22, 1972 p16-17. He references Smith, E.W. (ed.) *African Ideas of God. A Symposium, Second Edition Revised and Edited by E.G. Parrinder* London: Edinburgh House Press, 1950 p83.

<sup>619</sup> Bolink, Peter "God in Traditional African Religion: A Deus Otiosus?" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 5, 19-28, 1973 p21.

struggle, it was important for black Christians to reclaim God and to insist that he was present in their own past.<sup>620</sup>

Peter Bolink also makes the very reasonable comment that it is hard to find what 'real' African traditional religion is, as it has been so contaminated by contact with Islam, Judaism and Christianity.<sup>621</sup>

*"Perhaps it doesn't really matter if we do sometimes recreate our memories of the past, but we also do not need to accept a past that is recreated for us," said Thembi.*  
*"Yes, that is the situation which Black Consciousness thinkers had to deal with in South Africa," agreed Thando.*

In the same way that the Greeks, Romans and Jews had to wrestle with fitting their past into their Christian future, black African people in South Africa have had to work out how to fit into the Christian subculture, with their own particular history.

Gabriel Setiloane poses the question that arises from accepting that black Africans did have knowledge of God before the arrival of westerners:

There is a need for a short word on the place of Christ in the above scene, often called "African Theology". It is obvious that such an approach to the Gospel requires a re-interpretation of the major tenets of the Christian Faith as handed over to Africa, among them Christology. "African Christology" should be the title of a whole volume. Before it is written and accepted, I find it enough that the basic record of Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, as the one in whom divinity (*bo-Modimo*) is found as it has never been found in any living person before and after, is fully accepted by Africans. . . But what does this mean for the practical day by day faith of every African man? What happens when Africans become "Christian"? I suggest that they bring with them their dynamic understanding of "BEING" and read it in the Gospel story. The Life – Death – and Resurrection of Jesus become for them not only a thing of the past, far away. It becomes a thing of NOW, because it is happening within the theatre of MODIMO. What the missionaries have taught our fathers has been as it were with a resonance (like the call of the royal announcer from the top of the mountains in Lesotho on a still and quiet evening) which has penetrated the crannies and valleys of all being.<sup>622</sup>

It is reasonable to believe that black Africans, like the Jews, had a past which prepared them for Jesus, but Simon Gqubule suggests that we should move forward

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<sup>620</sup> Boesak, Allan "Civil Religion and Black Community" p39.

<sup>621</sup> Bolink, Peter "God in Traditional African Religion" p22-23.

<sup>622</sup> Setiloane, Gabriel M. "Confessing Christ Today: From One African Perspective: Man and Community" in *JTSA* 12, 29-38, 1975 p35-36.

into a new thing rather than going back to the old. However, this does not mean that all the old ways need to be abandoned:

As I see it, Black Theology cannot be a return to African traditional religions though it is valuable to discover the nature of these religions, in order to know the background from which we have come. To say this does not mean that black man must reject his own culture or social systems. Christianity does not need to be tied to any particular culture. You can be a Christian in your nciyo or beshu or sari. You do not need to have any particular dress in order to be a Christian.<sup>623</sup>

Monica Wilson gives a particular example of how Christian values can be seen in traditional African belief and practice – here confession, forgiveness and reconciliation:

As men become aware they begin to speak out. The Church as a whole has long understood the need for confession as the condition of forgiveness and reconciliation with God. In pagan Africa there is a long tradition of speaking out as a condition of reconciliation between kinsmen, living and dead, and between neighbours in village communities. At traditional rituals the offering of beer to the shades was often accompanied by people admitting to each other their anger. . . I learnt a great deal in this, as in other matters, from traditional Africa. I learnt deep down that speaking out was a condition of reconciliation; that anger festering in the heart was the root of evil. I have listened to the leader in the ritual beg those who attended: 'Drink up and speak out.'<sup>624</sup>

There is conflict, though, as on the other hand Cheri Roland, writing just a few years ago, describes a situation where she felt the good of Christianity was subjugated, wrongly, to indigenous belief:

Two weeks ago I went to White Cross Disabled Hope Centre with the group. We were happily greeted by several of the more mobile kids who led us outside to play. There is always a mattress on the ground with scattered lumps of little people under blankets who have been rendered quadriplegic; they lie all day at the caregivers' feet as the others sit or hop around them. Sphiwe, just a little guy, was lying on his side, his eyelids fluttering over a vacant stare. His upper body was developed but his waist and lower body were pitifully atrophied. Although he is the size of a toddler, I was shocked to learn he is ten years old. He had just returned from a home visit over the weekend. Stewart, founder of this agency, lifted Sphiwe's shirt to show me a traditional ancestors' green cord that had been tied around his waist. I asked why it wasn't removed. Our own seminarians quickly assured me, "You can't take it off! That is to ensure the ancestors give good prayers." I shuddered.

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<sup>623</sup> Gqubule, Simon "What is Black Theology" p17.

<sup>624</sup> Wilson, Monica "The Future of Christian Church in South Africa" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 12, 7-15, 1995 p12.

This is deeply imbedded stuff. In ancestor worship, Jesus is still just one of the boys.<sup>625</sup>

During the struggle era, it was not only a matter of working out 'right' and 'wrong' in the context of traditional African beliefs, but working out 'right' and 'wrong' when the apartheid government acted in ways deemed inconsistent with the Bible. In particular, as Paul wrote about sacred days being divisive, Manas Buthelezi also found this a difficulty, but in a different way:

In our own country the national Christian zeal to keep the Sabbath holy is not deemed contradictory to the parliamentary knack for creating discriminatory legislation that subjects black humans to indignity . . . the fact of the matter is that the greater part of the Christian Church in South Africa has been held captive by a theology that abstracts Christian life from human life. One of the basic maxims of this theology seems to be "the more sanctified your life becomes the more irrelevant human and earthly things become." In other words, here Christian growth is a matter of the eclipse of the human life by the Christian life. The eclipse accounts for the blind spots in many a Christian conscience. While professing brotherhood of all in Christ, Christian men have made laws and regulations which ban fellowship in restaurant and toilet facilities, to cite one example of the universal aspect of human life.<sup>626</sup>

Allan Boesak worked amongst the so-called-Coloured people. They had more privileges than 'dark black' Africans did, although they were also not free.<sup>627</sup> Boesak's people were torn between accepting limited privilege on one hand and standing with those who were more severely deprived on the other. He used Paul's idea of the weak and the strong to urge his people, who saw themselves as strong to side with the weak and to serve them. He called on them to stand "teen die uitholling van ons menswees; teen die verkragting van die Evangelie, teen die gruwelike misbruik van sy Naam in 'Christelike' Suid Afrika."<sup>628</sup> They were confused about protecting unity in the church (as Paul seems to require) and Boesak explains the dilemma, on the one hand:

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<sup>625</sup> Roland, Cheri *The Golden Rule Rules?* 2012 np [online] available <http://behaghitstheroad.blogspot.com/2012/09/the-golden-rule-rules.html>, accessed 7 November 2012.

<sup>626</sup> Buthelezi, Manas "Daring To Live For Christ: By Being Human and Suffering for Others" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 11, 7-10, 1975 p7-8.

<sup>627</sup> Certain people were classified as 'Coloured' under apartheid legislation. People in this group were predominantly mixed-race. The appellation Coloured is now often rejected and thus so-called-Coloured is sometimes used.

<sup>628</sup> Boesak, Allan *Die Vinger Van God* Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1979 p49.

Many in the church are greatly disturbed. Our unity is threatened, they say: let's not fight among ourselves, let us leave others in peace. People are entitled to their opinions, they say: in the church we must talk, we must find one another, give one another room to differ...after all, we are the church.<sup>629</sup>

But on the other hand:

The church must make clear choices. How can we see the pain, the suffering, the blood, the cruelty of this system, and not make a choice for justice, peace and human freedom? If in that choice we must openly oppose those who try to protect oppression and injustice through the use of gospel words like "peace", "reconciliation" and "unity", then so be it.<sup>630</sup>

*"These complexities existed in the first century, they existed in the struggle era and they continue to exist today. How do we reconcile injustice with trying to live peaceably together?" wondered Carol.*

#### 8.4.2 Desmond Tutu - *mysterium tremendum* and the African *Weltanschauung*

Desmond Tutu had strong feelings about the religious past of black Africans:

To claim that there were no real religious truths in Africa before the Christian era is in effect to say that only in this continent did God remain utterly unknown, since he must surely have revealed himself, say, to the Greeks with their passion for truth, goodness and beauty, and to others as well; it is to ignore the testimony of the Bible itself that God nowhere leaves himself without witness. It is really to diminish God as a God who had no dealings with part of his creation. . . It is accepted now on all hands that most Africans have believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, variously called *Modimo*, *Mdali*, *Qamata*, *Mwelinzani*. He is all powerful, the Creator usually of all there is. He is utterly other than his creation, i.e. he is transcendent, not to be approached lightly by man for he will fill him with that numinous awe which made Rudolf Otto speak of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.<sup>631</sup>

However, he recognises the shortcoming of the African past. He agrees with those who say that we cannot just go back and that there are things in the old ways that cannot be accepted – while saying again that this does not mean that black Africans were godless:

I do not for one moment wish to give the impression that all was well in the African garden. There were many aspects of the African *Weltanschauung* – the

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p17. <sup>629</sup> Boesak, Allan *Walking on Thorns: The Call to Christian Obedience* Geneva: WCC, 1984

<sup>630</sup> Boesak, Allan *Walking on Thorns* p17.

<sup>631</sup> Tutu, Desmond "Some African Insights" p18-19.



African worldview, which were sordid. There was much that had to be abolished, there were many fears and anxieties from which the African needed to be liberated. But this is surely to labour the trite and the obvious – that Africa had both the good and the bad. Is that not true of any culture or civilisation ever known to man? What I wish to point out is that most non-Africans just did not believe that there could be any good. They might have said with sincerity what Nathaniel once said of Nazareth “Can anything good come out of Africa?”<sup>632</sup>

Desmond Tutu’s commitment to both his traditional past and his contemporary Christian faith seem to be very similar to that which Paul was teaching.

## **8.5 Afrikaner**

### **8.5.1 The people – sacred history, identity and institution**

The Afrikaners had a strong sense of history which shaped their identity:

It is an interesting study to note the striking relationship between the Afrikaner’s awareness of his history and the realisation of himself in national terms. Thus does F.A. van Jaarsveld argue, “Though man is by birth a member of a particular nation, history can bring home a deeper insight into its true character and help to initiate the youth into a national way of life. A knowledge of its development will also protect a person from alien ideologies and prevent him from acting at variance with national norms.”<sup>633</sup>

Not only were the Afrikaners formed by their history, but they attempted to ensure that this history continued to play a shaping role in the nation. The secret society called the Afrikaner Broederbond had enormous influence in the Afrikaner educational institutions and began ideologizing history to help to form the people into a *volk*.<sup>634</sup>

Integral to these developments was the reinterpretation of Afrikaner history as ‘sacred history’. President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal Republic, a founding member of the Gereformeerde kerk, made powerful rhetorical use of this theme in his speeches in the years preceding the Anglo-Boer War. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, the notion of Afrikaner history as ‘sacred history’, with the *volk* as the Chosen People, became the normative filter through which Afrikaners as a whole interpreted their history. The Great Trek was the Exodus from the bondage of British rule at the Cape; it led to the years of struggling in the wilderness against all odds, en route to the promised land of the Boer Republics. There, like Israel of old, the Afrikaner nation fulfilled a

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<sup>632</sup> Tutu, Desmond “Some African Insights” p17.

<sup>633</sup> Villa-Vicencio, Charles “S.A. Civil Religion” p9. He quotes van Jaarsveld, F.A. *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History* Cape Town: Simondium Publishers, 1964 p178.

<sup>634</sup> Giliomee, Hermann *The Afrikaner* p197.

divine mandate to remain separate from and rule over the heathen nations in the interests of Christian civilisation.<sup>635</sup>

*“The past was integral to the Afrikaner’s sense of identity. The way in which this identity was formed meant that the Afrikaner reading Paul’s words may have felt that they were kindred spirits, products of their various histories, called by God to a new and wonderful thing,” mused Elmarie.*

Afrikaners managed to fit their culture with their Christian religion. They contrived to merge the two and Christianity became a tool in the expansion of their culture into Africa:

Biblical concepts such as election and covenant were given a national, racial and cultural interpretation (Akenson 1992; Meyer 1940:110; Richardson 2001:4). The Afrikaners’ excellent knowledge of the Bible became a handy tool in the hands of the government to guarantee submission to authority and to create a sense of belonging with the aid of familiar Christian symbols, laws and customs.<sup>636</sup>

When the National Party came to power and apartheid became law, Afrikaners had the opportunity to enforce their religious culture legally:

Christian moral codes were converted into laws that enhanced Christianity and Afrikaner *culture*. Mixed marriages and polygamous, as well as potentially polygamous, marriages were outlawed.<sup>637</sup>

This combination meant that the Afrikaner people became increasingly dependent on authorities for keeping them doing what was right. Often religious belief and practice ceased to be a personal thing, but were a national obligation.<sup>638</sup> This resulted in changes to the nature of church:

This brought Afrikaner Christianity in South Africa to its knees, bowing to the worldly hunger for power and control while losing its voice and sense of right and wrong and the strong will to act as followers of Christ, regardless of the way the official church reacted to it. In the hands of the official churches, religion was degraded to the same level as politics. ...Christian faith can no

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<sup>635</sup> De Gruchy, John “Christianity in 20<sup>th</sup> Century South Africa” in *Living Faiths in South Africa* (ed. Martin Prozesky & John de Gruchy) London: Hurst & Company, 1995 p89.

<sup>636</sup> Oliver, Erna “Afrikaner Christianity” p4. She references Akenson, D.H. *God’s peoples, covenant and land in South Africa, Israel and Ulster* New York: Cornell University Press, 1992; Meyer, P.J. *Die Afrikaner*, Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers, 1940 p110; Richardson, N. “Apartheid, Heresy And The Church In South Africa” in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14(1), 1–21, 2001 p4.

<sup>637</sup> Oliver, Erna “Afrikaner Christianity” p5.

<sup>638</sup> Oliver, Erna “Afrikaner Christianity” p5-6.

longer be subjected to structures that focus on social order and hierarchy. Christian mission cannot be restricted within statements and official declarations by church institutions.<sup>639</sup>

Oliver describes this state of the Afrikaner church as being a stranglehold.<sup>640</sup>

*"I don't know whether this is unique to Afrikaner Christianity and church practice or not, but this picture of authoritarian order and hierarchical structures in a somewhat soulless institution helps me to understand some of the conflicts that we Afrikaners brings to our faith. I still struggle," admitted Elmarie.*

#### 8.5.2 D. F. Malan – the greatest masterpiece

Villa-Vicencio quotes D.F. Malan, one of the chief architects of apartheid, describing how he saw in the history of the Afrikaner God's hand at work:

This history is a redemptive history – a history that read the hand of God within it. Dr D. F. Malan comments: "Our history is the greatest masterpiece of the centuries. We hold this nationhood as our due for it was given us by the Architect of the universe. (His) aim was the formation of a new nation among the nations of the world."<sup>641</sup>

We continue to see how D.F. Malan perceived the Afrikaner to be in a privileged position and the nation's special status in God's eyes. We see how he believed this gave him the mandate to put the Afrikaner interest ahead of all others and to forward its culture.

### 8.6 My Voice – making choices

I do not have a pre-Christian experience, being born into a Christian-dominated society, with actively Christian parents and an early commitment to Christianity. I was not taught to value the past particularly. My cultural tradition is to value the new and the exciting and to look forward to change and improvement. I often see the past as useful only insofar as we should not repeat our mistakes. I had no love for the school subject of history – remembering also that I was part of an

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<sup>639</sup> Oliver, Erna "Afrikaner Christianity" p6.

<sup>640</sup> Oliver, Erna "Afrikaner Christianity" p6.

<sup>641</sup> Villa-Vicencio "S.A. Civil Religion" p10. He quotes Pienaar, S.W. (ed.) *Glo in U Volk: D.F. Malan as Redenaar, 1908-1954* Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1964 p235-236.

apartheid education system and the words 'indoctrination' and 'brainwashing' were often heard in my home.

*"Ha-ha, that might explain some of the things you believe!" Carol was getting tired of being serious.*

*"Sh, let me talk!"*

I am suspicious of what is called history and even as I write this thesis am so deeply aware of how inadequate our knowledge of the past is. We attempt to grasp that which we can barely see or touch. Yet we need to make the effort to know what we can and somehow use it to find the truth and what is useful for the present and the future.

*"That is true. I am aware of how hard it is to understand other South Africans and their history. It takes a bit of arrogance to assume that we understand things from first century Rome!"*

My experience of the struggle has been one of cultural conflicts. White South African Christians usually lived a step removed from the struggle, even if we were sympathetic to it. Amongst Christians, there were many different opinions as to what was permitted in the fight against injustice. When the SACC began to not oppose (I will put it that way rather than saying support) the taking up of arms, many churches found their members in conflict. One of Albert Nolan's study groups came up with this statement. I can't say that I supported it at the time, because I simply did not understand what was happening and had a very vague awareness of it. It makes sense to me now, though:

Armed struggle or war is an exception to the general rule and can be contemplated only when it is the only way left to prevent much worse violence. It is what one might call choosing the lesser of two evils because the only choice open to us in some circumstances is between a greater and lesser evil. In South Africa some people have decided that they (but not necessarily everyone else) have been left with no other choice. Nobody is suggesting that we *all* resort to armed struggle. There is always place, plenty of place, for non-violent actions alongside any armed struggle. Whether we agree with these people or not, we have to make our own moral judgements

about what God wants us to do in the circumstances. We cannot be armchair critics of other people's agonising moral judgments.<sup>642</sup>

While it makes sense to me, it does of course create a disconnect in that I was unwilling to support my husband being in the defence force and was pleased that he became an objector.

*"Yes, because 'religious objection' was to all war, consistency would demand that you also not support the 'armed struggle'. Nothing was simple," observed Carol.*

Another disagreement, which seems strange to me now, but is a reminder of how much our (or my) engagement with scripture has changed over the years was the disagreement over whether we could pray for the downfall of the government. This controversy is documented in Allan Boesak and Charles Villa-Vicencio's book, *When Prayer Makes News*. Firstly, Villa-Vicencio, in his introduction, mentions that we are told to pray for our leaders:

The Scriptural record is clear. Civil authority is instituted of God in order to rule with justice, goodness, and love (Romans 13). This same record is equally clear that civil authority can be a source of blasphemy against God (Revelation 13). In this awareness Christians have through the ages prayed that they may be godly and quietly governed.<sup>643</sup>

John de Gruchy expands this to say that we should then be able to expect God to remove ungodly leaders:

From the beginning of the Christian movement Christians have been exhorted to pray for those in authority (see for example 1 Tim 2:1-7). The reason for this is that Christianity regards the state as something given by God for the maintenance of justice and order. To pray for those in authority expresses both an acknowledgement of their role and importance and the conviction that they can only exercise their authority under God. In other words, to pray for those in authority immediately indicates that their authority is derived from God, that the state is not absolute, and that in the final analysis God can remove those in authority from office.<sup>644</sup>

The Methodist Church – and I would imagine that we are now embarrassed about this, opposed the call to pray for the removal of the government. Peter Storey,

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<sup>642</sup> Nolan, Albert *To Nourish Our Faith* p51.

<sup>643</sup> Villa-Vicencio, Charles "Introduction" in *When Prayer Makes News* p26.

<sup>644</sup> De Gruchy, John "Prayer, Politics and False Piety" in *When Prayer Makes News* (ed. Allan Boesak & Charles Villa Vicencio) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986 p106.

representing the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and Philip Russell of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa disagreed and repudiated any intimation that their churches had called for their members to join in this prayer. They held that the leadership was put in place by God and it was therefore the duty of Christians to support them in their office and to pray that they themselves would bring about justice and an end to oppression and violence.<sup>645</sup>

*“Distance in time gives a better sense of perspective on these issues, but there are always others questions, demanding that we see through cultural convictions and that we discover the way forward that is helpful,” said Carol.*

Reflecting on Wesley’s commentary on Romans 14<sup>646</sup> – as an acknowledgement of my Methodist bias – I see that Wesley is able to conceive that both eating and not eating could be acceptable to God and he is clear that certain things are ‘a matter of conscience.’ His encouragement is not to do a particular thing, but to seek that which pleases God. Wesley’s focus is not so much on the weak potential sinner, but on the strong who are not to judge but rather to build up and be careful of placing stumbling blocks. Typically for Wesley his interpretation is a social one, recognising our interactions with other human beings as significant. Wesley clearly is conscious of the nonhomogeneous nature of his community and of the potential for conflict.

*“What is this here?” asked Carol. She read out:*

*“I knew then the meaning of the white man’s duty. He has to take all risks, recking nothing of his life or his fortunes, and well content to find his reward in the fulfilment of his task. That is the difference between white and black, the gift of responsibility, the power of being in a little way a king; and so long as we know this and practise it, we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies.”<sup>647</sup>*

That quote comes from the last few pages of a book that I read just the other week. It was an old-fashioned adventure story. It reminded me that I read these sorts

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<sup>645</sup> Press Release in the appendix of *When Prayer Makes News* (ed. Allan Boesak & Charles Villa Vicencio) Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986 p164.

<sup>646</sup> Wesley, John *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, Volume 2* London: Thomas Cordeux, 1813 p52-53.

<sup>647</sup> Buchan, John *Prester John* epubBooks 2009, first published 1910 no page number.

of book as a child and they no doubt have had their impact on me. I admit that I have painted my past and that of English-speakers generally, in an overly rosy hue. I doubt if any South African has been without the influence of the white supremacist thinking. Myself included. I am a little embarrassed!

*“Oh, right,” said Carol awkwardly. “Moving on then . . .”*

*“The blend coming up is going to allow us to integrate the past with the present. We will see the past as a ghost that always whispers to us and informs our thoughts and behaviours. Here the ghosts of the different pasts will almost take on lives of their own as they express things which are often hidden. Be ready!”*

### **8.7 An interlude of thought**

*“I’ve been thinking about this compression thing. It’s quite powerful!” began the hidden observer.*

*“Yes, it is. What are you thinking?” queried the author.*

*“Well, there are all sorts of things you could do by compressing space and time. Now, this lever here – I reckon if we pull that, it will push the South Africans back to the first century! That would be so interesting to see. What would happen to the Afrikaners? The black people? How would they live?”*

*“You are being quite creative! But this is not a time machine. What information would you use to predict how the South Africans would fit into the society? You know for yourself that our knowledge of ancient Rome is limited. It’s ok to do some guessing – or speculating – but we are not trying to write a science fiction novel. Besides – who says they will end up in first century Rome? Maybe they will end up in first century Johannesburg!”*

*“Eish! I know practically nothing about first century southern Africa!”*

*There are a few moments of thoughtful silence.*

*“What about this then? We can bring many to one in compression. So couldn’t we put D.F. Malan and Desmond Tutu in this room together as a sort of compression?”*

*“Certainly we could. The Conceptual Blending experts describe a blend which they call ‘The Debate With Kant’:*

*Imagine that a contemporary philosopher says, while leading a seminar,*

*'I claim that reason is a self-developing capacity. Kant disagrees with me on this point. He says that it is innate, but I answer that that's begging the question, to which he counters, in Critique of Pure Reason, that only innate ideas have power. But I say to that, What about neuronal group selection? And he gives no answer.'*

*As a straightforward report, this passage describes an actual historical event in which Kant is tongue-tied when confronted by the modern philosopher. That no one interprets the passage this way presents us with a bigger question: How can reporting an argument with a dead man count as a sane expression of one's philosophical position?<sup>648</sup>*

*"Oh. You think I'm insane?"*

*"No, not at all! The experts go on to say that the reason it works is because it is a clever conceptual blend. Your idea is good as a blend. The whole struggle could be seen as a conversation between Malan and Tutu. Perhaps you could write an article on it – I'll happily lend you the machine to try things out."*

*"Hmm. Perhaps. I've been wasting your time! What should we be thinking about?"*

*"Actually, I want us to move into pronghorn territory."*

*"Pronghorn? That sounds like something from Harry Potter.<sup>649</sup> Excellent!"*

*The author laughed. "No, it is a sort of American deer. May I read the story to you from the experts' book? They explain well and it is so much faster if I just read it?"*

*"No problem. I'm still reeling from Kant, maybe the pronghorns will stabilise me!"*

*"To get a feel for the role of imagination and the importance of blending and compression in building up identity, consider the following story, which appeared on the front page of the science section of the New York Times on Tuesday, December 24, 1996. The story, titled 'Ghosts of Predators Past,' was illustrated by a large photograph of a small American pronghorn antelope chased by pen-and-ink prehistoric cheetahs and long-legged dogs. The American pronghorn is excessively faster than any of its modern predators.*

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<sup>648</sup> Fauconnier & Turner *Conceptual Blending* p59-60. Quote marks inserted around the philosopher's words to help with clarity.

<sup>649</sup> This is a reference to the character nicknamed 'Prongs' in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling, London: Scholastic, 2001.



*Why would evolution select for this costly excessive speed when it brings no additional reproductive benefit? The scientists propose that the pronghorn runs as fast as it does because it is being chased by ghosts – the ghosts of predators past. ... As researchers begin to look, such ghosts appear to be ever more in evidence, with studies of other species showing that even when predators have been gone for hundreds of thousands of years, their prey may not have forgotten them (p.C1).<sup>650</sup>*

*“That’s fun. I can see some of the compressions immediately. There is the compression of all pronghorns into one. That is all pronghorns across space and across time. Actually that is two compressions. The old-time predators are compressed into modern day ghosts. The whole sequence of being chased is compressed over time. I’m pretty sure there is more.”*

*“You’ve done well. You can also compress change – that is a bit harder to see intuitively. Here the pronghorn actually evolves or adapts across historical time to get faster, but the blend makes it seem as if it simply changes in the course of the chase. We could keep unpacking the compressions, but you have the idea.”*

*“But how does that fit in with our particular blends? I wouldn’t mind having a look at some pronghorns . . . especially if they are running from prehistoric cheetahs!”*

*“We are going to look at certain pronghorns – if you don’t mind them being metaphorical. Listen to what a modern writer said about the ghosts that human pronghorns might have:*

*Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They have deep roots and long lives. They persist, generation after generation, virtually intact, even as the economic and social demographic conditions that spawned them have vanished, and they play such a role in directing attitudes and behaviour that we cannot make sense of our world without them.<sup>651</sup>*

*When you watch the people in the following blends, remember the ghosts. The ghosts of their pasts. Things that may once have influenced their grandparents or earlier generations and so now indirectly influence them.”*

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<sup>650</sup> Fauconnier & Turner *Conceptual Blending* p115.

<sup>651</sup> Gladwell, Malcolm *Outliers* p175.

*“Groan. You have now made a blend between the pronghorn blend and our blends. This is too deep for me! Let’s watch something, please?”*

*“It’s coming up! We will see our blending actors in new roles now,” said the author.*

Three people sit on visitors’ chairs in a modern office. They are clergy. The leader is a ‘coloured’ woman of middle age, Susan. The others are a youngish black man, Jabu or *mfundis*’ and a white woman, Marjorie. They are having a meeting.

It starts with a bland, general, devotion taken from the internet. There is a vague, predictable discussion of the portion. There is little animation.

*“No! Being in meetings is bad. Now you want me to watch a meeting? It’s like watching paint dry. Give me prehistoric cheetahs!”*

*The author laughed. “I’ll give you three levers. Let’s call them ‘ghosts’, ‘ghostbusters’ and ‘cheetahs’. Pull them one by one in that order, but anytime you like.”*

*“Ok, I’m pulling ‘ghosts’ right now.”*

A misty substance – a ghost - formed behind Marjorie. The clergy were unaware of it. Yet when it spoke the listeners outside could hear and understand. It expressed Marjorie’s thoughts and it represented her past experience and its influence on her.

*“The devotion lacked animation because we are all afraid of offending. I feel fear. Are we all afraid?”*

Susan: We need to talk about our joint church service. Where should we have it and where?

Marjorie (tentatively): My society prefers to have a service at the normal time at their own church. We could have the joint service in the afternoon?

Jabu: But people are used to having church in the mornings and more people will come if we do it then.

Susan: I don’t mind what we do. Perhaps in the afternoon at Marjorie’s church?

A ghostly mist formed behind Jabu and articulated his thoughts, shaped by his past. "Coming together is so important. We don't do it as much as we ought to. People need to remember that we belong to each other. That we are one circuit. It's all about being together."

Jabu: It's good to come together and have a big crowd and see all the ministers working together.

Marjorie's mist shivered. "If we come together at a normal service time it leaves the other churches empty. Someone who really needs Jesus might just decide to come to church that day and there would be no one there. Or the service will be small and disorganised and they will go away and not come back. We need to be thinking about the people on the outside, not about ourselves all the time. But they don't get it. They think the white people are standoffish and don't want to meet with them. That might be true for some, but only a very few. We just really believe in the local church."

Marjorie: I know that I will take flak if we don't have a local service. I understand that you like to come together, but let's make it a special event.

Susan's mist formed and whispered, "I wish there was something in the rule book to cover this. How do I please the white woman and the black man? What will the bishop think? My people will go along with either – but I am not sure if they will be enthusiastic."

Susan: I think let's go for the afternoon. Jabu, at your church will that be ok? Will you do the music? Marjorie can preach and I'll ask my folk to organise some eats.

Marjorie shuddered a little as he mentioned Jabu and music. She thought about the choir. Her mist mused, "They have a good choir. But Jabu has persuaded them to wear a uniform. I'm so afraid that I'll be under pressure to use uniforms in my church. My people don't respect uniforms. They think that people are making too much of themselves. The old people sometimes like it – they like me to wear a gown. But I know that it is to take pressure off themselves. If I look different to them I can be dismissed. The younger people think it is affected and silly. They despise it as if they think I think it makes me something special. My people need to come to terms

with me, and any choir, as human beings just like themselves. We need to be able to lead by example.”

Jabu’s mist puffed itself up a bit. “The choir members look so good in their uniforms. I’m so proud of them for doing it. Casual clothes are alright, but you need to look your best for God. Ungodly people don’t care how they look. Slovenly people are a disgrace and especially if they are in church. We need to have pride in ourselves and how we look. When I wear my cassock and my stole people are reminded of how awesome God is. They remember that I have the authority to lead them. They enter better into a time of worship. I wonder how this church ever got into a state of casualness?”

Susan: Good. You’ll have your choir then, as well. I think that will work nicely.

*“Those funny ghosts are more interesting than the ministers! I can see how the background thoughts are shaped by some of the past we mentioned. But now, imagine if the background voices could be seen and heard. That would give them a shock.”*

*“Well, you know how it is with the influence of the past – our ghosts. Sometimes we are not even aware of our own ghosts and many people are not aware of those belonging to others.”*

*“These people look so tense. And the meeting is so stilted. They all just want to get away – except for Susan. She seems to know what she is doing.”*

*“You have the levers!”*

*“Here we go, ‘Ghostbusters!’”*

Susan: We’ve discussed taking our cultural differences seriously and now we have a perfect situation to work things out. How do you feel about it? (Her mist, “I am leaving the prejudices of my past behind. I know this is the right thing to do, but I don’t know what will happen. I’m scared of where it might lead.”)

Marjorie’s mist, “I know this is important, but I am so afraid of losing what matters to me. Of being bashed because I am white. Of my past being counted as wrong.”

Marjorie: Yes, I think that’s a good idea. What are we going to do?

Jabu's mist, "I'm so afraid of being treated as if I'm backward because I'm black. I'm so scared of being forced back into the past. I'm scared that I have to be the sort of black person other people say I must be."

Jabu: Yes, we need to move on to a new future. Did I hear someone say 'Ghostbusters'?

Marjorie: Uh, we seem to have three ghosts sitting with us. Do you see them – or am I hallucinating?

Marjorie's ghost, audibly: I just used a big word – hallucinating. I hope the others don't think I'm showing off. Too late now.

Marjorie – looking very embarrassed: Oh dear, sorry.

Susan: I see them too. This is going to be challenging! I was about to mention that I received an email about a Conceptual Blending workshop. It said there might be ghosts and we shouldn't worry.

Susan's ghost: Would you mind if we suspended reality for a moment? We really hope that this will be a meaningful exercise. I wonder how much you have thought about me before? About Susan's past I mean.

Susan (embarrassed): Oh dear!

Marjorie: Cool, this should be fun. I am a bit nervous though!

Jabu: Ok, if it's ok with Susan.

Susan: Yes, but I believe we can carry on during the suspended reality? Good, we need to talk about our stipends for next year at our business meeting and I thought that we should discuss the matter here first. I w a n . .

*"Everything's frozen! What's going on? Gosh, is that really their thoughts being spoken out loud? Make it work!"*

*"Oh dear. I don't know if it's really their thoughts. If I was making it all up, it could be true, but it's real, so maybe it's not."*

*"What are you talking about?"*

*"Remember that we are looking for truth, not clever inventions? These are based on true situations, but I can only give interpretations from my own perspective."*

*I know myself in the story, but I must guess at the others. I take off my cultural lenses, but then I must take them off again. I feel like Eustace in the Dawn Treader clawing through layers of dragon skin to find his real self underneath.<sup>652</sup> It is PAINFUL!”*

*“Is that why it is frozen? Because you don’t know what she would say?”*

*“I’m afraid so. Let’s skip forward.”*

The conversation had developed with Marjorie expressing willingness to take a lower stipend as the circuit was struggling. Susan has been used to the higher stipend for some years and seems reluctant to take a drop or to allow others to do so. Jabu has been very quiet and non-committal. Each is trying not to be too coercive or to step on toes. The ghosts, having been ‘bust’ now step in and speak out loud.

Susan’s ghost: For years, under apartheid, I was treated as an inferior human being. It wasn’t too bad, I got along, but I knew that white ministers received higher stipends than I did. And sometimes they didn’t even work as hard as I did. As black people we needed to take a stand. We are just as good as white people (often better). We deserve to receive fair pay. We struggled for this. We celebrate that the day has come that we are free. When we have economic freedom we shall be truly free!

Marjorie’s ghost: For years I was taught that the world was full of people who had less than I did. I was taught to make the most of my resources and to be careful with money. I was taught to balance the books carefully and to give away as much as I could to churches and caring organisations. I have tried to live this. I do not live extravagantly and my children have learnt to dress and eat simply. We can get by on a lower salary. Even the lower salary is higher than that of many of my church members.

Jabu’s ghost: I have children in a private school. I am making the most of my new advantages. I appreciate them and am grasping them with both hands and am grateful for those who fought for the end of apartheid. I know that I don’t always

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<sup>652</sup> A reference to an incident in Lewis, C.S. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952 p92-99.

understand money matters. I don't want to be greedy or selfish. I want my church to do well. I am confused. What is the right thing to do?

Jabu: Thank you ghosts. I'm afraid didn't understand all of that, but I think I see the point. Colleagues, can we not find a solution that allows us all to live by our values and consciences and which is also good for the church?

Marjorie: Sounds good to me.

Susan: I think that we could do that.

*"Time for the last lever. Is this going to put the cat amongst the pigeons?" the observer laughs.*

*"You may have your prehistoric cheetahs. Will they find prehistoric pronghorns, I wonder?"*

There was a noise of shouting outside the office window. All the ministers stood up (in a suitably dignified manner) and walked to the window. Outside was a group of young people. They carried posters with the word #stipendsmustfall<sup>653</sup> and they were chanting, singing and dancing. Others were standing at the edges tapping away on cell phones and tablets. Some were taking photos and videos. Empty packing cases were unloaded from a *bakkie*<sup>654</sup> and an impromptu stage was built. Speakers began to climb up and harangue the crowd. People were drawn in from the streets, curious to know what was going on.

Marjorie took out her cell phone and logged in to twitter. She typed in the hashtag and found it already trending. The tweeters in the crowd were busy initiating the tweets and there were many interested followers who were retweeting. In the meantime, the dancing and singing was getting louder. Police cars started to arrive.

Susan: It looks like we've been talking about this for too long. Our hopes to work it out properly have been smashed. It's out of our hands.

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<sup>653</sup>A referral back to the Fees Must Fall protests at South African Universities in 2015. A good analysis may be found at [www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/behind-the-university-funding-crisis](http://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/behind-the-university-funding-crisis) written by Belinda Bozzoli, 19 October 2015. Hashtags allow conversations on the internet to be grouped by topic, marked by the # symbol.

<sup>654</sup> Small truck.

Marjorie: I wonder if we have been serious about trying to find a solution. These young people have become frustrated and impatient. Do you see the ghosts?

They all looked at the crowd more carefully. Yes. There they were – black tribal dancers, men and women. The ghosts of Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko, dancing in their business suits. White ghost people writing in notebooks, dashing off to telephones to get their articles in to the newspapers. Reasoned, thoughtful arguments. Decisive comments. Proposals. Others ghosts stood and attempted to dominate. The suits – of both men and women – dark and dour. The faces bleak and harsh. Haranguing.

A bus pulled up and a strange group emerged. They wore tunics or robes, sandals or barefoot. They pulled out placards which said #dontstufftheox.<sup>655</sup> Several pushed their way over to the podium and took on oratorical poses. Others pulled a giant cross out of the bus. Hanging on it was an effigy of a rabbi – or was it a ghost? The assortment of ancient weaponry carried was bewildering. In the street a column of Roman infantry formed up, and watched, placidly. Jewish zealot ghosts eyed the figure on the cross angrily.

*“Don’t stop now! This is exciting. What will happen?”*

*“That’s the question, isn’t it? What will happen? Will the group finish their demonstration and go home to tea? In the meantime will the ministers make wise proposals on the stipends? Or will it come to this . . .”*

One of the zealot ghosts prodded a figure in a tunic and pointed out the rabbi effigy. He kept prodding and poking until the Jew approached the Gentile holding the cross. They exchanged words. Others were drawn in. Soon it was apparent that tempers were becoming frayed and the group was no longer aware of the broader crowd.

One of the black ghosts saw Marjorie looking through the window. He shouted out and drew the attention of other black demonstrators. White marchers seemed to get involved. The three clergy drew back from the window and it was apparent that a

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<sup>655</sup> A reference to Deuteronomy 25:4 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18 (although the latter would probably have not been known to the Romans). The placards imply that the ox should have its feed, but does not need more than enough.



fist fight was breaking out between the black and white young people, the ghosts urging them on.

Before there was total pandemonium the police cars emptied and people were being separated. Roman soldiers confiscated the cross and waved it threateningly at first century protestors.

People dispersed, sulkily. They shook their fists and promised to be back.

*“Oh wow.”*

*“I’m afraid so.”*

## **8.8 Critical Analysis**

### **8.8.1 The blend**

The first part of this blend – the conversation about stipends – was intended to set the scene for the protests, but it took over the blend. I wanted a blend that would work with how the past influences the future. Just drawing the scene with the ghosts was complex and it started to evolve before I was ready for it. This has resulted in a blend which takes the autobiographical element – or my own contemporary setting – as an explicit input space. The South African struggle era formed another input space which provided the ghosts.

I forced the protests in as part of the contemporary setting. I then used pattern completion to put the original context characters into the blend. Thus the first century protestors were modelled on the contemporary ones and so arrived in a bus and carried placards, but any in many areas the first century characteristics dominated, such as clothing and the Roman infantry. This blend did not ‘elaborate’ or play out for long. The scene with its contrasts challenged my thinking quite soon.

This blend should probably have been expanded through more pattern matching to make the input space providing the first century characters with ghosts more explicit. We have done some of the work in our intertextual analysis, looking at Old Testament influences and sometimes background to the Graeco-Roman context. This would begin to make explicit the intertextual aspects of Paul’s own writing, as opposed to the intertextual aspects of our reading.

The blend started in such a mundane manner, yet as the layers have been stripped away, it became quite intense. I am writing this comment about a year after I wrote the interlude and students are busy with 'Protests 2016' and I am following on Twitter concerned for the safety of my own children. Many of the protestors did 'go home for tea' after 2015, having made their point. Others seem to think that protest *is* the point and 'are back as promised'.

What did Marjorie find as she drew back from the window and faced her colleagues? Which ghosts were at work – the South African racial ghosts, the ghost of Paul and his writing, other unthought-of and unknown ghosts?

### 8.8.2 The text

We saw that most of our voices set great value on the past – the Afrikaner even seeing their past as redemptive history. Paul did not use these words by chance, but with the realisation of how much validity continuity with the past would give his gospel. The Greek uses multiple words to reinforce the idea of promised before, while every voice except my own set much value on its past and traditions.

Paul claimed that every culture prepared its people for God and so they were without excuse. We certainly see this in the work of Plato amongst the Greeks. It is arguable whether the African people in general believed in one God, but that *bo-Modimo*, divinity, should be found in Jesus was not completely alien. Certainly the belief in ancestors showed knowledge of an unseen world beyond what is visible. The Jewish Old Testament, of course, is believed by Christians to set the stage for the coming of Jesus.

When Paul says 'beforehand' he knows that it does not only signal unity. Rather it reminds us of the differences that exist in peoples' backgrounds and the potential for conflict. He mentions the Jews focus on food and holy days and suggests that rather than shaming or honouring people, Christians should build each other up. Our understanding of the potential for conflict is broadened when we realise that Black Consciousness saw Christians' keeping of the Sabbath (or Sunday) as being inconsistent with denying people their dignity. Some people also see conflict between the African belief in living ancestors and belief in Jesus. Conflict is also created when people have different ideas of how to live as Christians – people may see different Christian values as more important.

There is also the danger of over-identification with the past. Paul does not give his own genealogy and we see the dangers of fusing religion and history as many of the Afrikaans speaking people did.

Thus, Paul proclaiming that his gospel was promised beforehand gives it a certain legitimacy amongst all people, but also warns of the potential for conflict amongst those who believe.

## CHAPTER NINE: OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

### 9.1 Introduction

***“the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” Romans 1:3-4***

These verses were linked in to our web as an extension of ‘gospel’ and ‘Jesus Christ’ and of ‘beforehand.’ The contents are dense and really deserve their own web. They are quite likely formulaic and Paul is probably quoting established phrases.<sup>656</sup> They will not be dealt with specifically here. They cover more ground than our limiting question allows.

*“Excuse me. Could you move out of the way?”*

*“Coming through . . .”*

*“Oh dear! What is happening now? I see that the Conceptual Blending team is rolling away enormous rope drums. There goes one labelled ‘Spirit of holiness’. Lots of them are labelled ‘Jesus Christ’ and ‘Lord.’ Let me find out what is going on – there is the lady with the clipboard! Hi there. Um, we are not actually finished the thesis yet.”*

*“I assure you that you are nearly done! We need to start clearing up. We’re starting with the unused rope and will move on from there. Don’t worry – the final blends are set up in your office already.”*

*“Sorry about that. Let’s move on quickly. Here are the next words from the letter.”*

***“through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” Romans 1:5***

From the outline:

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<sup>656</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p103.

through whom

(we have received  
grace and  
apostleship)

In these words, I see a parallel to verse 1 which may be due to our intertextual blending process as I don't find it in the scholars. Nevertheless, it is helpful to compare the two verses in the light of this approach and to see what insights may be found.

Firstly, we see in both that Jesus is the driving force. We have noted already that Paul being a slave of Jesus Christ acts under his authority. Verse 5 begins with "through whom" connecting back to the mention of Jesus Christ and the Son of God in verses 3 and 4. This  $\delta\iota'$   $\omicron\upsilon$  denotes the agency of Christ in Paul's ministry.<sup>657</sup>

The word apostleship in verse 5 links back directly to the word apostle in verse 1. This leaves us with the possibility that the intervening words relate. From verse 1 these are the words 'slave' and 'called' – which we suggested showed both Paul's abjectness and dependence on his master, but also his privilege at being chosen by God. We also expanded that to suggest a 'company of the called' based on other instances of 'called' in Romans. In verse 5, we have the phrase 'we received grace.' Jewett argues that "Here grace overcomes an insufficiency, thus making the call to service possible."<sup>658</sup> In this way, we may see that grace encompasses both Paul's slavery and his calling. Some commentators see a strong link between grace and apostleship in verse 5 because of the connector  $\kappa\alpha\iota$ , perhaps even that they form a hendiadys<sup>659</sup> and so the 'grace of apostleship'.<sup>660</sup> This connection reinforces the interpretation from verse 1 of Paul being a 'called apostle.' However, there are problems with insisting on the strength of this connection in verse 5.<sup>661</sup> Here the link suggested by the association of the word 'grace' with Paul's state of both slavery and being called leads to a change in emphasis so that Paul becomes a 'called slave.' If nothing else, this reminds us that the terms 'slave',

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<sup>657</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p77.

<sup>658</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* the p109.

<sup>659</sup> Where one word specifies the other.

<sup>660</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p78.

<sup>661</sup> Jewett argues that this would imply that all are commissioned on conversion. Jewett, Robert *Romans* p109.

‘called’ and ‘apostle’ are both independently significant and significant in their association with each other.

A further aspect of verse 5 is the use of the plural where Paul says ‘we have received grace’ while using the singular form of the first person until now. This may be understood as Paul not regarding himself as the only apostle<sup>662</sup> or as an ‘epistolary plural’ where it is simply a literary form.<sup>663</sup> The plural is consistent with our idea of a company of the called, although here, clearly, the calling is to apostleship.

We now come to the word εἰς which in both verses separates the subject (or the ‘who’) from the object (or the ‘what’).

In verse 1 the apostleship is to (εἰς) the gospel of God, in verse 5 it is to (εἰς) ‘the obedience of faith among all the nations’ (using the Greek order of the words). It is to these words that we now give our attention.

### ***“to bring about the obedience of faith” Romans 1:5b***

From the outline:

[to bring about the  
obedience  
of faith  
for the sake of his name  
among all the nations]

For these words, in applying the intertextual method, we will focus on the words ‘obedience’ and ‘faith’ and will do some level one study with them. We will look at the level two combination of “the obedience of faith”, also as a focus. When we include the other voices we will do it principally on the third level as we examine Paul’s intention in using these words and ask the question ‘what does each voice perceive as good’. The other phrases will be occasionally mentioned as part of the level two discussion.

We will use matrixing in the Greek section with the word ‘obedience’ to get a better idea of what Paul intends to say with ‘obedience of faith’ and which draws in the concept of righteousness.

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<sup>662</sup> Dunn, James *Romans 1-8* p16.

<sup>663</sup> Longenecker, Richard *The Epistle to the Romans* p78.

Matrixing in the Roman section will allow discussion of honour and shame.

These additions will help us to work with the level three meaning of the text.

*“So then, Paul is talking about some transformative action (‘to bring about’) into a new way of living or being,” said Junia.*

*“What is this new way of living? What is the goal of life?” asked Phoebe.*

*“What defines goodness or right-living? I see that these will be the questions for our different voices!” said Junia.*

## 9.2 Graeco-Roman

### 9.2.1 Greek - εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, God and standards

The preposition εἰς – literally, ‘into’, is translated by Jewett ‘leading into’<sup>664</sup> which seems a little more accurate than the RSV’s ‘to bring about’. The Greek ὑπακοὴν from ὑπακοή is translated ‘obedience’<sup>665</sup> with little confusion, if any. The Greek πίστεως from πίστις is translated by ‘trust in others’<sup>666</sup> and also with the idea of a commitment to others.<sup>667</sup>

*“Some people might think that it was Paul who was to have the obedience of faith amongst the nations,” said Phoebe, hesitantly.*

We are helped by a verse which mirrors verse 5 and its antecedents – that is Romans 16:26 which reads “but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.” The Greek phrase used here is identical, but the setting is such that it is clear that it is the nations who are being led into the obedience of faith.

The originality of the last three verses of Romans 16 is disputed<sup>668</sup> and Jewett sees the use of the phrase ‘obedience of faith’ in these verses as vastly different to that of 1:5.<sup>669</sup> I tend to agree with others who see them as consistent, regardless of

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<sup>664</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p110.

<sup>665</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* ὑπακοή.

<sup>666</sup> Liddell & Scott *Lexicon* πίστις, Bultmann, Rudolf and Weiser, Artur “πίστις” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume VI* p176.

<sup>667</sup> Nanos, Mark D. *The Mystery of Romans* p223.

<sup>668</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p998.

<sup>669</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p1009.

the author of the doxology and that the use of this phrase again in the second last verse of the letter shows the importance attributed to this idea by Paul.<sup>670</sup>

This obedience itself, ὑπακοὴν πίστεως, is unclear.

*“Yes, is simply having faith the obedience required? Is it faithfulness to a creed of the Christians?” asked Phoebe.*

*“Or does it mean obedience to Christ and his injunctions?”<sup>671</sup> asked Miriam.*

Don Garland, like epistle-writer James, sees faith without obedience as being impossible. “In a real sense, then, to speak of faith *is* to speak of obedience. ‘Faith and obedience are one action. Faith has to be proven by obedience.’”<sup>672</sup> Jewett is less emphatic, saying that the phrase narrows down the meaning of “obedience” and indicates specifically the obedience that comes as the result of the gospel.<sup>673</sup>

Using the tool of intertextual matrixing, we draw some other strands into our web. By looking at other uses of ὑπακοήν (and case variants) in the letter to the Romans we may come to a better understanding.

In Romans 5:12-19 the obedience mentioned is that of Jesus. “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous.”<sup>674</sup> We know that Jesus's obedience was to the Father and so we see that we are talking about obedience to the person of God.<sup>675</sup>

Romans 6:16-18 casts some light on this topic:

Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

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<sup>670</sup> Nanos, Mark D. *The Mystery of Romans* p192, 235-236.

<sup>671</sup> See Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p224.

<sup>672</sup> Garlington, Don “The Obedience of Faith in the Letter to the Romans: Part 1: The meaning of ὑπακοή πίστεως (Romans 1:5, 16:26)” in *Westminster Theological Journal* 52,201-224, 1990 p210 quoted in Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p223.

<sup>673</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p110.

<sup>674</sup> Romans 5:19.

<sup>675</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p230.



Paul frames the conversation in terms of a master and slave relationship. He says that we cannot escape obedience, but we can choose our master. This seems to me a slightly odd juxtaposition – we choose as a master either sin or obedience, but it could be that we see both disobedience (from 5:19) and sin (from 6:16) as opposites to obedience.<sup>676</sup>

*“But what is this obedience?” Junia was getting a little frustrated.*

He enlightens us in verse 17 where he says that the obedience is to the ‘standard of teaching’ that they received. He implies that having committed themselves to this obedience they receive a new master – righteousness.<sup>677</sup> We remember that this thread has another end, where we started with Paul as a slave. There we suggested that Paul might have chosen slavery as an oppressive symbol in order to renegotiate its meaning in his context. Here is a further step in the reconstruction process. The slave achieves freedom from sin, but while still a slave serves a new, and hopefully better, master.

*“This leads us to understand that the obedience required was to a set of teachings and anticipated behavioural change. That works for me,” said Junia.*

Romans 15:18, “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed.” Here the ‘word and deed’ are Paul’s. He writes of the empowering that God has given him to produce obedience in the Gentiles.<sup>678</sup>

Romans 16:19 offers an assurance and an appeal, “For while your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I would have you wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil.” These words may not be part of the original text – the use of ‘obedience’ without a context, such as ‘of faith’ is unusual. This seems to stand predominantly in contrast to the heretical group of the previous verses.<sup>679</sup>

*“However, he does implore the people to be sure that what they are obedient to is good and so they should take the contents of this letter and evaluate their obedience*

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<sup>676</sup> Kittel, Gerhard “α οὐω” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Volume I* p224.

<sup>677</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p230-231.

<sup>678</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p233.

<sup>679</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p992-993.

*of faith. Are they still conforming to sound teaching? Are they still on the path?*<sup>680</sup> remarked Phoebe.

So we see that the obedience of faith that Paul is looking for is obedience to some sort of standard. "There is a clear call to proper behaviour at the heart of Paul's 'obedience of faith' that has gentile responsibility to become 'slaves of righteousness' instead of continuing as 'slaves to sin' at the centre of his concern."<sup>681</sup>

*"The concept of the obedience of faith may be seen as a shape that frames the lifestyle rather than something that defines the lifestyle. The contents or details of that lifestyle are not explained here," said Junia.*

*"Paul is seeking to bring transformation to a lifestyle that is informed by an obedience, not to human authorities or self, but to something that is ultimately authored by Jesus Christ," added Phoebe.*

#### 9.2.2 Roman – honour and shame, unity and mutuality

In order to hear other voices we need to find some sort of equivalence of ideas.

*"Obedience and faith are not necessarily found across cultures in the way that Paul defined them," said Miriam.*

*"We see that Paul's goal for his readers or listeners was the obedience of faith and this would have perhaps defined 'good' for him. We ask ourselves how we might define 'good' for the cultures from which our other voices speak?"*

The idea of a cultural system that shaped, rather than informed, their lifestyle reminds us of the Mediterranean honour and shame culture, which also provided that shape. We will weave into our web some other verses from Romans which seem to be particularly relevant to honour and shame. Firstly, Jewett points out that in the honour and shame system, the word obedience itself was likely to be off-putting to the Graeco-Roman, "because obedience carried the 'stigma' of slavery and even the emperor preferred to phrase his directives 'as suggestions and advice.'"<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p235.

<sup>681</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p225.

<sup>682</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p110. He is referring to Lendon, J.E. *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* Oxford: Clarendon, 1997 p20.

The first additional verse we consider is Romans 1:16 where Paul speaks using the language of contemporary culture as he says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” The cultural framework would expect anyone who shows weakness or who violates cultural norms to feel shame – Jewett says:

There were deeply ingrained social reasons why Paul should have been ashamed to proclaim such a gospel; his claim not to be ashamed signals that a social and ideological revolution has been inaugurated by the gospel.<sup>683</sup>

By implication, the gospel is honourable - it is not in fact weak but is powerful being the power of God.<sup>684</sup> What is more, because this power is obtained through faith Paul is able to link it to the cultural framework of the obedience of faith that he is proposing. He rejects any thought that faith is the unique possession of any culture and “In contrast, overturning all claims of cultural superiority, Paul claims that God’s power of salvation exercises its transforming lordship over every group that responds in faith to the gospel of Christ crucified.”<sup>685</sup> So we may see that working within the understanding of honour and shame, Paul moves his audience to a place where faith is valued more.<sup>686</sup> We might perhaps express this by saying that Paul is decoding the honour and shame framework as an oppressive construct and reforming it in the notion of the obedience of faith.<sup>687</sup>

In Romans 2:6-10, where Paul speaks about God rewarding certain behaviour Paul frames it within the honour and shame context. He says, “to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life;” (verse 7). We note the relevance to our question of looking for what is good. Certainly God should reward behaviour which he desires and here that behaviour is described as well-doing – or working the good with steadfast endurance, as Longenecker suggests.<sup>688</sup> The motivation for this good, Paul suggests is glory, honour and immortality. These first two are echoes of what is found in Job 40:10 and Psalm 8:5 where God’s desire for his people is expressed as including glory and

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<sup>683</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p137.

<sup>684</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p137.

<sup>685</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p140-141.

<sup>686</sup> We see similar ideas in Romans 9:32-33 and Romans 10:11-13. Jewett (*Romans* p137) also draws in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 20-31.

<sup>687</sup> Using the ideas of Paulo Freire as seen in chapter 5.

<sup>688</sup> Longenecker, Richard *Epistle to the Romans* p 256.

honour<sup>689</sup> and we see how this speaks into the specifically Jewish frame of thought. Similarly, glory and honour were central motivations in the culture of the Mediterranean world and young people were taught to emulate those who attained them.<sup>690</sup> Jewett points out that the Greek translated ‘immortality’ may also be translated ‘incorruptibility’ and this may fit better as a motivation for good works while immortality makes God’s reward of eternal life redundant.<sup>691</sup>

Verse 10, “but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek” reinforces the threefold reference to cultural goals – glory, honour and, in this case, peace, as well as the assertion that actually doing good (rather than seeking glory and so on) will lead to these goals being met.<sup>692</sup> Paul uses peace rather than immortality in the repetition and this may well be due to his desire to see peace amongst the Roman congregations and peoples and his trust that this will become their aim and goal.<sup>693</sup> In this verse, we also see the reminder that these promises are for all cultures, just as we were told in 1:16.<sup>694</sup>

We observe that Paul does not here specify what this good looks like and we might, by looking at our web that we are weaving, say this is the obedience of faith, expressed within the honour and shame framework – even reclaiming and reforming that framework, but here the ultimate glory and honour is given by God.

We see, in passing, that in Romans 12:10 Paul encourages the honouring of others – “love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour.” We pay more attention to Romans 13:7 which expresses a similar encouragement, but within the context of the governing authorities. This latter causes us to wonder whether Paul is placing the honour and shame framework above any other, including that of the obedience of faith. As Neil Elliott writes (quoting Halvor Moxnes):

... the exhortation in Rom. 13:1-7 served rather to “strengthen an integration of Christians into the Hellenistic symbolic universe,” reinforcing the social stratification experienced in public life. Thus Paul seems to have “accepted

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<sup>689</sup> Longenecker, Richard *Epistle to the Romans* p 256.

<sup>690</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p205.

<sup>691</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p205.

<sup>692</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p208, Longenecker, Richard *Epistle to the Romans* p258-259.

<sup>693</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p209. Jewett refers us to Romans 14:17, 19 and 15:13, 33 should we have wished to pursue this in our web.

<sup>694</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p209.

the system of honor operating on the public world of Greco-Roman society,” encouraging Christians “to live within the given power structures and to conform to the civic virtues of honor and praise.”<sup>695</sup>

We may argue that while Paul ‘seemed to accept’ the honour and shame system, he was using it as a starting point to explain his transformative alternative. We also note that in Romans 13:1-7:

Whereas the Julio-Claudian and Flavian propaganda asserted that the ruler had become the embodiment of all virtue, Paul demotes the ruler to the subordinate status of God’s “servant” (Rom 13:4, 6) who, like the rest of humanity, awaits the arrival of eschatological judgement (13:11-13).<sup>696</sup>

In this way, Paul has worked with the honour and shame system, but once again disempowered it, so that the ruler is on a level with all people. Furthermore, Esler reminds us that this passage is sandwiched between two passages speaking about love and that it is likely continuing the treatment of the topic in this particular context.<sup>697</sup>

*“So that Paul is again disempowering the honour and shame culture by submerging it in that of obedience by faith! Nice,” said Junia.*

This is a very brief look at a difficult passage, but we can perhaps imagine that Paul is demanding the obedience of faith from the servant ruler while still operating within the honour and shame culture.

We also weave Romans 3:23 into the web, “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Robert Jewett says that the significance of this in the context of the honour and shame culture is often overlooked:

... the use of the verb ὑστερεῖν (hysterein, “fall short”) has not been sufficiently explained, because an equivalent term is not employed in any of the Jewish parallels. This is a comparative term relating to the failure to reach a goal, to be inferior to someone, to fail, to come short of something. The basic

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<sup>695</sup> Elliott, Neil “Paul and the Politics of Empire” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (ed. Richard A. Horsley), Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000 p20-21. He references Moxnes, Halvor “Honour, Shame and the Outside World in Paul’s Letter to the Romans” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee* (ed. J. Neusner) Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988 p207-219; Moxnes, Halvor “Honor and Righteousness in Romans” in *JSNT* 32, 61-77, 1988.

<sup>696</sup> Harrison, James R. “The Imitation of the ‘Great Man’ in Antiquity: Paul’s Inversion of a Cultural Icon” in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts) Leiden: Brill, 2012 p246.

<sup>697</sup> Esler, Philip *Conflict and Identity* p331.

connotation is that of “deficit, which consists either in remaining below the normal level, or in being behind others,” hence placing one in a position of deserving shame.<sup>698</sup>

In this verse Paul again shows that although he works in the context of the honour and shame system, he is actually subverting it by claiming that all are equal within it, having all fallen short and being thus deserving of shame.

Jewett also shows how the greetings in Romans 16 may be interpreted in the honour and shame context.<sup>699</sup> He says that the Greek word ἀσπάσασθε was surely intended to read “you should greet” and not “I send greetings to”. In listing a variety of people and groups in this list of who should be greeted he is implying that the people should honour one another as equals and not greet only those at a similar level of honour to themselves:

In Rom 16:16, all the members of the various house and tenement churches as well as the returning refugees in Rome are admonished to “greet one another with a holy kiss,” which implies a deep level of unity and mutuality between all Christians in Rome, thereby overturning the normal boundaries of honor and shame.<sup>700</sup>

### 9.3 Jewish

#### 9.3.1 Honour and shame – seen in the Old Testament

We have already seen much of what was considered good by the Jewish people in Old Testament times by looking to their heritage and law.

*“But surely we can see something of honour and shame in this culture as well?”  
asked Miriam.*

*“Yes, we certainly can.”*

We take as an example the shaming of David’s men by the Ammonites in 2 Samuel 10:

... the Ammonite commanders said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think David is honouring your father by sending envoys to you to express sympathy? Hasn’t David sent them to you only to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?” So Hanun seized David’s envoys, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut

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<sup>698</sup> Jewett, Robert “Paul, Shame, and Honor” p560.

<sup>699</sup> Jewett, Robert “Paul, Shame, and Honor” p565.

<sup>700</sup> Jewett, Robert “Paul, Shame, and Honor” p565.

off their garments at the buttocks, and sent them away. When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, "Stay at Jericho till your beards have grown, and then come back." (2 Samuel 10:3-5)

T.M. Lemos in her study of mutilation and shame in the Hebrew texts uses this as an example and explains:

The act of shaving off half of the men's beards fulfils its aim by ridiculing the masculinity of the envoys . . . the partial shaving effects a lowering of status by removing that which visibly separates one status group from another, that is, men from women. The second act of humiliation performed upon the men, that of exposing their buttocks and/or genitalia, is one known from other texts to have been particularly shameful.<sup>701</sup>

The uncertainty experienced by the Ammonite leaders may be typical of the difficulty of interpreting a challenge in the 'challenge and response' part of an honour and shame culture. Here they were wrong – David genuinely meant to honour the dead king. Their mistake resulted in war.<sup>702</sup>

### 9.3.2 Nationalism

After the exile and subsequent return to Israel, the Jewish people developed a vehement nationalism which was not known earlier. David Aberbach describes the development of this nationalism as being due to prophetic culture and its later survival due to the centrality of the Law:

By the time of its defeat and exile, by the Babylonians in the early sixth century BCE, Judah evidently had a prophetic culture strong enough to survive exile. The attachment to the homeland in some ways became even more intense than in the past. After Jews were allowed under Persian rule to return to their land (after 538 BCE), their national identity was built increasingly upon the observance of the Law. Consequently, when the Romans destroyed the Jewish state and exiled many of its inhabitants in the first and second centuries CE, a pacifist religious-cultural nationalism was firmly established which, *faute de mieux*, became for nearly 2,000 years mainstream rabbinic Judaism.<sup>703</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> Lemos, T.M. "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible" in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, 225-241, 2006 p233.

<sup>702</sup> Esler, Philip "2 Samuel – David and the Ammonite War: A Narrative and Social-Scientific Interpretation of 2 Samuel 10-12" in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context* (ed. Philip Esler) Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006 p196.

<sup>703</sup> Aberbach, David *Jewish Cultural Nationalism: Origins and Influences* London: Routledge, 2007 p3.

Clearly, this did not come out of nowhere and it had its origins in the Exodus from Egypt as Aberbach describes:

... the self-determination of a band of slaves who, against the odds, escape into the desert, accept their own sacred laws, conquer the Promised Land, and create their own government and religious-national culture centred on Hebrew Scripture.<sup>704</sup>

The happenings of the inter-testamental period cemented this rise in nationalism. Doron Mendels describes how there were many early nations who were attempting to preserve their uniqueness during the time of the conquests of Alexander the Great. The Jews were not in this respect unusual. In general the Greek system of government allowed nations to retain their governance structures, cultures and religions – this was believed to be the best way to stop uprisings and to keep the people conquered.<sup>705</sup>

Mendels describes how nationalism was reinforced among the Jews because the ruling nations were not able to avoid confronting their religion, thus it was impossible for the Jews to simply accept their new overlords:

It was impossible for the majority of Jews to do so, because the symbols of these new rulers were statues placed in temples and public spaces as well as images engraved on coins, something absolutely forbidden by Jewish law. It is primarily for this reason that the Jews were the only nation in the ancient Near East that could not adjust to foreign rulers and had to create their own state. When it was impossible for them to do so, they were frustrated.<sup>706</sup>

This resulted, in due course, in clashes with these overlords – in particular here we speak of the Seleucids - and ultimately in the re-establishment of a sort of Jewish state:

The terrible clash with the Seleucids started as a religious upheaval in which the Jews fought for religious independence, and ended up being a more nationalistic upheaval led by the Maccabean brothers ... Through cunning policies and service under the various claimants to the Seleucid throne, they

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<sup>704</sup> Aberbach, David *Jewish Cultural Nationalism* p2. See also Keesmaat, Sylvia C. *Paul and His Story: (Re)interpreting the Exodus Tradition* Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1999 p34-36.

<sup>705</sup> Mendels, Doron *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997 p21-22.

<sup>706</sup> Mendels, Doron *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* p23.



brought about the establishment of a Jewish state, though one ill-defined in character.<sup>707</sup>

During this period of upheaval in the Jewish nation, the Hebrew Bible developed, both as an entity, and as a unifying force of the nation.<sup>708</sup>

Thus when we find the Jews in the New Testament, they have a strong national identity and the law has become a marker or a key feature of who they are as a people.

*“In this context, a nation’s reason for existence - or what defines good - could be said to be to protect themselves and ensure their continued existence,” said Miriam.*

We see that Paul does not legitimise the Jews’ nationalism as a cultural framework. In Romans 2:17-24 Paul calls the Jews out on their sense of privilege.

[Paul] is demonstrating that the national ‘boast’ of ‘the Jew’, namely that Israel as a whole is charged with putting the world to rights, cannot be made good, because of the glaring errors of some which have resulted, as every Jew knew, in the prophetic denunciations which indicated that the vocation had been stood on its head. Instead of the gentiles looking at Israel and praising Israel’s God, it was working the other way: they were looking at Israel *and blaspheming Israel’s God*.<sup>709</sup>

In Romans, then, Paul recognises what they perceive to be good, but challenges them to look further – ultimately to that obedience of faith.

### 9.3.3 Righteousness

When we talk about goodness, we inevitably need to refer to righteousness. We dealt with Romans 1:16 in the context of honour and shame and verse 17 continues the thought started in verse 16, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’”

The nature of this righteousness is the subject of some debate. Boyarin, arguing that gentiles should not obey the law describes righteousness as follows:

If God’s righteousness is the righteousness which is by faith in Christ and which is available to Gentile as well as Jew, then the Jewish righteousness

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<sup>707</sup> Mendels, Doron *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* p24.

<sup>708</sup> Aberbach, David *Jewish Cultural Nationalism* p6.

<sup>709</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* p812. Italics are in the original.

which was zealously sought is the righteousness available to the Jew *alone* on the basis of observing the law.<sup>710</sup>

He indicates the commitment Jewish people had to pursuing righteousness and suggests that they saw it as a legal concept.

James Dunn acknowledges that scholars have had the perception of Judaism as a works-based religion, but insists that the idea of justification by faith was more present in Jewish belief and practice.<sup>711</sup> He suggests that we have some difficulty in resolving our understanding of righteousness in the New Testament because of the use of two English words – justice and righteousness – in translating two closely related Greek words (δικαίω, δικαιοσύνη). He continues:

I refer also to the fact that the underlying Hebrew thought in both is different from the Greek. In the typical Greek world view, 'righteousness' is an idea or an ideal against which the individual and individual action can be measured. Contemporary English usage reflects this ancient mind set when it continues to use such phrases as, 'Justice must be satisfied'. In contrast, in Hebrew thought 'righteousness' is a more relational concept – 'righteousness' as the meeting of obligations laid upon the individual by the relationship of which he/she is part.<sup>712</sup>

Jewett agrees with the context of relationship and claims the agreement of most scholars that "the biblical concept of righteousness was primarily relational, associated with covenant loyalty."<sup>713</sup>

Dunn applies this relational righteousness to God's righteousness (as seen in the first part of verse 17) He says the righteousness of God:

... denotes God's fulfilment of the obligations he took upon himself in creating humankind and particularly in the calling of Abraham and the choosing of Israel to be his people. Fundamental to this conception of God's righteousness, therefore, is the recognition of the prior initiative of God, both in creation and in election... It should be equally evident why God's righteousness could be understood as God's *faithfulness* to his people. For his righteousness was simply the fulfilment of his covenant obligation as

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<sup>710</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew* p117-118.

<sup>711</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007 p364-365.

<sup>712</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *The New Perspective on Paul* p363.

<sup>713</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p141.

Israel's God in delivering, saving, and vindicating Israel, despite Israel's own failure.<sup>714</sup>

Jewett puts the concepts of relationship and covenant together to come up with the idea of righteousness being achieved by being a part of an active faith community where all are faithful to their covenant with each other and presumably also their covenant with God.<sup>715</sup>

We see in this verse that faith and righteousness are connected as in our starting point of the obedience of faith. There is much debate as to how these two relate<sup>716</sup> and Jewett prefers that, unlike the RSV translation, the word 'faith' should be linked to 'live', rather than to 'righteous'. He also prefers that this living refers to the here and now rather than to eternal life – thus the righteous will live by faith – implying their involvement in faith communities.<sup>717</sup> Jewett does not totally abandon the idea of commitment to a standard, if not a law, as he says, "The gift of righteousness brings the believer in obedience under the lordship of Christ."<sup>718</sup> These understandings are significant in that they open the way for gentiles to be included in the Christ community without limitation – and without taking up Jewish practices.<sup>719</sup> Both righteousness and obedience are now seen as products of faith, and this faith is available to all. This statement is possibly not sufficiently nuanced, but we understand it in terms of what has been said before.

## 9.4 African

### 9.4.1 Traditional – hero and householder, extended agnatic family

#### ***Honour and Shame***

John Iliffe has done extensive research into honour in Southern Africa cultures, using predominantly oral memories and praise literature which has endured since the time of the heroes that the poems celebrated. Much of the following is from

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<sup>714</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006 p343.

<sup>715</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p143.

<sup>716</sup> See for example Jewett, Robert *Romans* p145-146.

<sup>717</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p146-147.

<sup>718</sup> Jewett, Robert *Romans* p141.

<sup>719</sup> Nanos, Mark *The Mystery of Romans* p177-178.

his work.<sup>720</sup> In the late 1700s and early 1800s, the cattle-owning societies had grown in size and number and were starting to compete for resources.

*"I'm sure this created the ideal breeding ground for honour and shame cultures!" exclaimed Thando.*

Iliffe finds two forms of honour which he describes as hero and householder. Hero honour relates to prowess in war and to male sexual virility. Householder honour refers to the ability to manage a household well and often refers to an older man. Multiple marriages would enhance householder honour.

As we look at honour and shame in various African cultures, it must be remembered that not only did resources start to become in demand and a source of conflict around the turn of the century, but the arrival of European settlers caused a massive change in the dynamic. Peter Becker writes:

The Mthethwa were ruled by Dingiswayo, a young chief who, before ascending the throne, had undertaken a journey into the Cape Colony, where he had traversed the territory of several foreign tribes and had also come into contact with White men. So inspired was Dingiswayo by the diversity of experiences he had gained during his wanderings, and especially by the lessons he had learned in regard to the White man's military systems, that on returning to his homeland he could not but be displeased with the simple, sedentary mode of life his own subjects pursued. He contrived to introduce some of the ideas he had gleaned from the customs of the peoples he had visited, and to uplift the Mthethwa and convert them into the most powerful clan in Zululand.<sup>721</sup>

Notions of honour and shame varied from tribe to tribe or nation to nation. Nonetheless, there was much in common and the following distinctions should not be taken as absolute.

### Ndebele and Zulu

In the Zulu language, the word for honour was *udumo* which also means thunder. This gives us an idea of the ostentatious nature of honour in the culture. Records mostly describe the heroic kind of honour. Under the reign of Shaka every adult male was trained as a Zulu warrior. Before this time, honour was probably not

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<sup>720</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p140-160.

<sup>721</sup> Becker, Peter *Path of Blood* London: Granada Publishing, 1972 p23.

primarily gained through military prowess. Praise songs show that, “One was praised for his hunting, another for his shrewdness, and a third for his beauty.”<sup>722</sup>

Zulu and Ndebele soldiers were trained to fight with short stabbing spears. This required them to come close to the enemy to engage combat and they despised tribes who used missiles – long distance weapons. Although fighting in regiments made warfare a group exercise, the spear still allowed warriors the opportunity to demonstrate personal prowess in single combat.<sup>723</sup>

This heroic ethos pervaded male life. It stressed physical strength and beauty, whether displayed in the near-nakedness of daily life or the elaboration of military costume and personal adornment, carefully graded by age and rank. Dance was a further means of display, replacing military drill and demonstrating athleticism, discipline and solidarity. Shaka danced regularly with his people, as did Mzilikazi of the Ndebele.<sup>724</sup>

Honour was also achieved by demonstrating sexual virility – whether it was young soldiers sneaking into the royal enclosure to visit the girls there or older men accumulating wives.

If an insult was given, it demanded a violent response – sometimes leading to death.

### Sotho

Prior to King Moshoeshoe, a contemporary of Shaka, honour was not based on warfare, however King Moshoeshoe was a skilled and diplomatic leader and praise poems remember him for his career as a warrior. This was typical of the praise poetry of the nation which from that time emphasised warfare and used ferocious metaphors.<sup>725</sup> Max du Preez recounts an interesting story of how Moshoeshoe got his name – somewhat reminiscent of the story of David and the Ammonites:

Lepoqo became Moshoeshoe when, shortly after his visit to Mohlomi, he raided the cattle of an opposing chief, Ramonaheng. On his return a praise singer made the sound of a shaving blade, *shwe, shwe*, and chanted that

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<sup>722</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p146.

<sup>723</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p142.

<sup>724</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p142-143.

<sup>725</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p146.

Lepoqo had shaved off Ramonaheng's beard. He thus became Mo-shwe-shwe, or Moshoeshoe as it is spelt in Sesotho.<sup>726</sup>

By the 1850s, the people were chased out of their agricultural holdings by the Afrikaners of the Orange Free State with their guns and horses. The Sotho people under this influence also adopted guns and horses as their means of warfare, although they also carried battleaxes and long spears.<sup>727</sup> The Sotho people were not as brutal as others and while the word for hero, *mogale*, denotes quick temper, the words for honour, *hlonepho* and *tlotlo* speak of respect and courtesy (as opposed to the thunder of the Zulu nation). Sotho society was less strictly tiered than Zulu and Ndebele society and King Moshoeshoe was open to criticism. People, including women, had more freedom in how they spoke.

### Tswana

The Tswana were characterised by much the same things as have already been mentioned. Like the Sotho society, they were not as violent or autocratic as the Zulus were. However, they did have brutal initiation rites which "trained young people of both sexes in the stoical endurance of pain."<sup>728</sup>

### Xhosa

Honour was also central to the life of the Xhosa man. "Some took a medicine alleged to guarantee fame. Warriors received names of honour and composed their own praises."<sup>729</sup> The Xhosa people never became as militarised as the Zulus, but physical prowess was still valued. Warfare between Xhosa groups was more like a tournament with animals and people being captured, but these were returned when the opposing side acknowledged defeat. Initially they were people of peace, but more bitter warfare caused them to become more and more like their opponents in brutality. During these wars, two chiefs in particular came to fame. They had very different characters, yet both were men of honour.

Maqoma personified the Xhosa notion of honour as *indumo*, connoting fame and renown. Sarhili, perhaps, personified honour as *imbeko*, connoting

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<sup>726</sup> Du Preez, Max *Of Warriors, Lovers and Prophets: Unusual Stories From South Africa's Past* Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004 p55.

<sup>727</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p147.

<sup>728</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p149.

<sup>729</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p153.

respect and decency. The two notions were not incompatible, but they expressed the distinction between hero and householder.<sup>730</sup>

Householder honour may be identified from court records – which in the case of the Xhosa people were available from after 1850. These records showed that the people went to court on matters relating to slander – preferring court action to vengeance or a feud – and also theft, witchcraft and sexual immorality. These made up 85% of all court cases and are typical of threats to householder honour. None of the complaints had to do with heroic honour – challenges to physical courage and male virility.

As Iliffe concludes:

Accusations of theft, witchcraft, and female promiscuity appear as the chief slurs on the reputation of the Xhosa homestead. They marked out an indigenous notion of respectability complementing military heroism and pride of rank. This was probably the norm in sub-Saharan Africa. Here it can for once be demonstrated.<sup>731</sup>

Iliffe also notes in the course of his study that this culture of honour – particularly with the importance of violence and martial prowess – was generally incompatible with Christianity. This is partly why missionaries struggled to make converts. When they were successful, it was because the chiefs had the ulterior motive of gaining arms and advantage, or because the people were particularly weak.

We note that in this section, we have spoken about an honour and shame culture, but here we have more than just a framework. The framework would be similar across world cultures, but the particular way the framework has been filled belongs to these African cultures.

### ***Ancestor Veneration***

We have already mentioned the ancestors and we just need to remind ourselves that they were also an important part of the day-to-day lives of early Africans. Peter Magubane gives a very succinct explanation of the ancestors,

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<sup>730</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p155.

<sup>731</sup> Iliffe, John *Honour in African History* p160.

according to Xhosa belief.<sup>732</sup> His description is also useful as he gives them a place within the household hierarchy.

The agnatic group (i.e. related through the male line) consists of a cluster of agnatically related household heads and their offspring living in a particular area. Since these men are the descendants of a common great-grandfather, they are very conscious of the group to which they belong. This cluster can vary from 2 or 3 to about 20 household heads. Land and stock is not held communally by members of the cluster, but is rather held by individual homesteads within the cluster. These groups have two important, but limited functions: firstly, to settle disputes between members of the group, and, secondly, to constitute the congregation of the ancestor cult.<sup>733</sup>

Magubane goes on to explain that these agnatic clusters belonged to a common clan, inheritance and naming always being through the father. The clan, however, was generally distributed over a wide area, with many clan chiefs and local clusters.

He also describes how the ancestors form part of the agnatic cluster:

The effective spirits or shades are typically the deceased senior males of the agnatic group. The Xhosa refer to the ancestors as *iminyana*, whereas the Mpondo call them the *amathongo*. Notably men of weight and influence during their lives, the shades were leaders of followings – the clan founders, clan leaders and chiefs of the distant past – occupying nodal positions in the kinship structure and with many descendants. The ancestor cult is essentially the cult of the domestic unit, the extended family. As the living link between the members of the homestead and the ancestors of the agnatic group, the male household head officiates on ritual occasions, in person or by proxy. The deceased household head is incorporated by his sons as an ancestor of the homestead, a process which normally involves two sacrifices.<sup>734</sup>

He carries on to describe the sacrifices required and to say that all who die may become ancestors and will be able to affect the lives of family members. He explains the extent to which this ancestor cult affects the lives of the people:

Quite apart from illness and misfortune, traditional rituals (*amasiko*) are performed at virtually every stage of the life cycle, from birth, through puberty, marriage and menopause to death.<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>732</sup> Magubane, Peter *Vanishing Cultures of South Africa: Changing Customs in a Changing World* Cape Town: Struik, 1998.

<sup>733</sup> Magubane, Peter *Vanishing Cultures* p19.

<sup>734</sup> Magubane, Peter *Vanishing Cultures* p28.

<sup>735</sup> Magubane, Peter *Vanishing Cultures* p32.



Thus it can be seen that people lived, also, to please their ancestors. The male household head, in particular, would have a potentially demanding responsibility to see that all the requirements of the cult are met.

Mogomme Alpheus Masoga gives us an insight into the ancestor cult with an example from modern day life:

For many, if not most, Africans, modern life does not exclude participation in divinatory practices. For example, imagine a young, well-qualified engineer driving from Sandton with her new BMW 5 Series, a top-of the-range laptop computer on the seat next to her, to see her grandmother and ask her to bless her new property. She drives to Giyani kaMalamulele, dusty and remote. On her arrival, a divine-healer of the clan meets her and immediately sprinkles substances on her car. The *ngaka* then gets a goat slaughtered for the special occasion. *Vakokwani* (grandmothers) of the entire clan sing praises to the young lady. For some, this may be strange. For African people, it is a daily occurrence. It is central to their lives, philosophies, and cultures. Modern life does not exclude this particular part of African spirituality. The ancestors are not outdated nor out of touch with current developments and the challenges and demands of modern living. They are a living part of life – they know about laptops and BMWs.<sup>736</sup>

#### 9.4.2 Black Consciousness – affirmation of humanity, black worth

*“We know what is ‘good’ for Black Consciousness,” said Thembi. “The aim of Black Consciousness is clear as its purpose is always the liberation of black people from oppression. We’ve already discussed this quite a bit.”*

James Cone, one of the most vocal proponents of black theology and black power writes:

The goal of black self-determination and black self-identity – Black Power – is full participation in the decision making process affecting the lives of black people...Black Power then is not black racism or black hatred. Simply stated, Black Power is an affirmation of the humanity of blacks in spite of white racism. It says that only blacks really know the extent of white oppression, and thus only blacks are prepared to risk all to be free. Therefore, Black Power seeks not understanding but conflict; addresses blacks and not whites; seeks to develop black support, but not *white good will*. Black Power believes in the utter determination of blacks to be free and not in the good intentions of

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<sup>736</sup> Masoga, Mogomme Alpheus “Becoming *Ngaka*: Coming to Terms With Oral Narrative Discourse” in *Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Southern Africa* (ed. Jonathan Draper) Leiden: Brill, 2004 p217.

white society. It says: If blacks are liberated, it will be blacks themselves who will do the liberating, not whites.<sup>737</sup>

An important component of what Cone says here is the 'affirmation of the humanity of blacks'. In South Africa, it was sometimes felt that Christianity itself undermined the humanity of people and was used to subjugate black people. Simon Maimela begins to correct this where he writes:

The Bible teaches us something specific about the human selves; it sets limits and parameters about what can be said and affirmed about 'man'. Our Bible does teach us that humans, though originally good creatures of God, have through fall become corrupted, twisted, misdirected and deeply immersed in sin that pervades their life and work (Gen 8:21, Ps 5:5, 58:3, Jn 3:16, Rom 5:12-21, 7:7-20). Because of sin humans do not love and serve each other as they should; they love wrongly, and relate to each other not rightly...But it does not include that humans are by nature monstrous and wholly evil.<sup>738</sup>

Maimela continues, calling on us to stop thinking negatively about humanity, but to develop what he calls a positive anthropology:

This is then the basis for Christian justification for the proclamation of a positive anthropology, which we must not only believe and pray for, but work hard to embody and realise in our relations and dealings with our human fellows to whom Jesus is related as their Brother and God as their Father (Romans 8:14-17).<sup>739</sup>

Simon Gqubule saw this negative view of people as a primary problem with the oppression of black people. He called for a re-thinking of the way Christianity taught about the nature of people – and then to take that revised thinking seriously:

In South Africa the Black man is given less value than a White man when the Black man is paid 20% or 10% of what is paid to a White for doing the same job. This is the value placed on Black men here. In all aspects of our life here the Black man is daily dehumanised and depersonalised. That is the reason why we need to look afresh at the Christian doctrine of man and try and apply it scrupulously to all aspects of our social life.<sup>740</sup>

Black Consciousness meant reclamation of black people's concept of self-worth. "The black man needs to be liberated from the white man's rejection so that

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<sup>737</sup> Cone, James *Black Theology and Black Power* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997, Section 4.

<sup>738</sup> Maimela, Simon *Proclaim Freedom to My People* Braamfontein: Skotaville, 1987 p54.

<sup>739</sup> Maimela, Simon *Proclaim Freedom to My People* p58.

<sup>740</sup> Gqubule, Simon "What is Black Theology" p22-23.

the white man's rejection may cease to be a factor in the process of the black man's discovery of his human worth and potential."<sup>741</sup> They needed to stand up for themselves and assert their own value and their own freedom. Ernest Baartman proclaimed:

Black Consciousness is the name for Kaffir, Hottentot, Coolie, non-European, Bantu and non-white saying loudly "NO" to the Baas, the Master, the European and the White. It is the black man saying "NO" to white racism in all its forms, oppressive and paternalistic. It is the black man saying "NO" to the arrogance of the white verkrampptes, verligtes, liberals and progressives. No more is he going to try and fit into a non-white portrait drawn by the white man. No more is he going to say what the white man wants to hear and thus continue his own indignity. No more does the white man epitomise all that is good, just and of value. No more is the white man the black man's yardstick to humanity. Black Consciousness is the black man saying "YES", he says yes to who he is in Jesus Christ. He affirms all that Christ affirmed... To white theologians who are going to use their criteria for assessing Black Theology, my response is go on, but your white standards are irrelevant. The black man is not seeking your approval.<sup>742</sup>

This was not an approach that relied on hiding from reality. There was no pretence that things were not bad or that in real terms black lives were often treated as worthless. It was important for black people to recognise their suffering. However, in the light of Black Consciousness this suffering was transformed.

At this moment in South African history the suffering of the black man is becoming redemptive. The black man is now regarding his suffering as a step towards liberation instead of a pool of fate and self-pity. Right in the midst of the experience of suffering the black man has made himself believe that he can do something about his own liberation.<sup>743</sup>

I have not seen this specifically related to honour and shame culture anywhere, but we could rephrase the message of Black Consciousness to be a reclaiming of the honour and shame framework, but under black leadership. The content would no longer be determined by white people, but black people would write their own content and make their own determination as to what would be considered honourable. As social identity theory tells us:

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<sup>741</sup> Buthelezi, Manas "Six Theses: Theological Problems of Evangelism in the South African Context" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 3, 55-56, 1973 p56.

<sup>742</sup> Baartman, Ernest N. "The Significance of the Development of Black Consciousness for the Church" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 2, 18-22, 1973 p19.

<sup>743</sup> Buthelezi, Manas "Daring to Live For Christ" p9-10.

We can only establish the validity of our collective beliefs in collaboration with others who we categorize as similar to ourselves. Hence, fellow group members serve as essential reference points for our own perception. Our reliance on them is not in conflict with our concern with reality -- it is through them that individual views are co-ordinated and transformed into *shared* values, beliefs and behaviours that have an objective quality.<sup>744</sup>

## 9.5 Afrikaner

### 9.5.1 Calvinism – to depart from ourselves

According to his “Institutes of Christian Religion”, John Calvin saw the purpose of man in Romans 12:1-2. Essentially that we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices and be transformed in our way of thinking. He unpacks it as follows:

This is a very important consideration, that we are consecrated and dedicated to God; that we may not hereafter think, speak, meditate, or do any thing but with a view to his glory. For that which is sacred cannot, without great injustice towards him, be applied to unholy uses. If we are not our own, but the Lord's, it is manifest both what error we must avoid, and to what end all the actions of our lives are to be directed. We are not our own; therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and our actions. We are not our own, therefore let us not propose it as our end, to seek what may be expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own; therefore let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours. On the contrary, we are God's; to him, therefore, let us live and die. We are God's; therefore let his wisdom and will preside in all our actions. We are God's; towards him, therefore, as our only legitimate end, let every part of our lives be directed...Let this then be the first step, to depart from ourselves, that we may apply all the vigour of our faculties to the service of the Lord. By service I mean, not that only which consists in verbal obedience, but that by which the human mind, divested of its natural carnality, resigns itself wholly to the direction of the Divine Spirit.<sup>745</sup>

### 9.5.2 Apartheid – defending white African interests

*“Everything about apartheid is so caught up in the Afrikaner's idea of their purpose that we realise they saw this purpose as good. We have covered a lot of the ground here already,” said Elmarie thoughtfully.*

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<sup>744</sup> Reicher, Stephen et al “The Social Identity Approach in Social Psychology” in *Sage Identities Handbook* (ed. M. S. Wetherell & C. T. Mohanty) London: Sage, 2010 p9-10.

<sup>745</sup> Calvin, Jean *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (trans. John Allen) Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board, 1843 p619.

F.A. van Jaarsveld in his article on the Afrikaner's sense of calling tells how it was articulated in 1961:

A speaker at a meeting in April 1961 told his audience that it was our calling "to spread the light of the Gospel in Dark Africa" and that to ensure the abiding nature of this calling we had to "sustain ourselves as a white people". *Die Transvaler* in 1961 considered that our calling was seated in "the assurance of the continued existence of white civilisation" and in upholding "western culture and civilisation" in this "outpost".<sup>746</sup>

These two themes of being the bearers of the gospel and of needing to preserve themselves as a nation have been seen consistently throughout the thesis.

It is worth noting that by the time of the 1970s and 80s the Afrikaner ideological position had changed. Due to apartheid's provision of privileged education and employment opportunities, the working class was no longer predominantly Afrikaner. The National Party started drifting to the left and was supported mainly by middle-class suburban Afrikaners as well as English-speaking people. By 1982, when P.W. Botha was prime minister, it was already clear that apartheid was not sustainable. When South Africa became a republic in 1961 Afrikaners felt less threatened by the possibility of Anglicisation and the white population became somewhat more accepting of one another. Increasingly white people were rejecting apartheid as an unjust system.<sup>747</sup>

The desperation of the National Party caused them to play on white fears of communism and of black people. Under John Vorster as police minister and later as prime minister, a new sense of purpose could be recognised:

John Vorster... built a security police system and enacted legislation creating an authoritarian state. Vorster's legislation empowered the police and security police to harass organizations and detain or ban their leaders. At Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1976, the police also demonstrated a preparedness to shoot demonstrators. From the perspective of Westernized urban blacks, South Africa became a police state. This only served to increase the popularity of the NP among white voters – with the NP learning to portray itself as the only organization tough enough to defend white African interests against an "unholy alliance" of "black radicals", communists, "terrorists," and "bleeding-heart Westerners." But, ironically, when Vorster became prime minister, he showed how, once created, an authoritarian state/ security police

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<sup>746</sup> Van Jaarsveld, F.A. "Afrikaner Calling and Mission" p25.

<sup>747</sup> Louw, P. Eric *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid* Westport: Greenwood, 2004 p62-

system could also be turned against those who created it – that is, Vorster began using the security police against those opposing him inside Afrikaner nationalist ranks.<sup>748</sup>

*“By this time, South Africa had no ideological excuse for its policies – its government had simply become self-serving and corrupt,” said Elmarie.*

*“The apartheid envisaged by D.F. Malan may have had some sense of sincerity to it, and could possibly be seen as genuine desire to do the right thing, but the system rapidly unravelled,” added Carol.*

## 9.6 My Voice

### 9.6.1 Wesleyan – enormous vision

When I was younger, I had the impression of John Wesley as being a person who was ‘out there’ in the world.

*“What do you mean by that?” asked Carol.*

He didn’t seem to me to be someone who sat and waited for God’s work to happen. He was confident to defy the authorities and willing to act in ways which seemed unorthodox. He was also totally committed to Jesus and to finding truth in the Bible. He cared about people regardless of their station, regardless of anything. He was passionate – and I could not understand (in my distant youth) why he preached a sermon against enthusiasm,<sup>749</sup> which word seemed to describe one of his qualities admirably!

He had an enormous vision – the world as his parish, wanting to spread scriptural holiness throughout the land. He worked for God constantly. He had an incredible focus on the work of God - you have one task and that is to save souls. He thought little of himself and expected others to be similarly self-effacing.

*“Would you say he was a role model?” asked Carol.*

*“Yes, I would!”*

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<sup>748</sup> Louw, P. Eric *The Rise, Fall, and Legacy of Apartheid* p65.

<sup>749</sup> We would call what Wesley called enthusiasm, fanaticism today.

I still see John Wesley in the same way, but as I am older, I find life a little bit harder and the demands of family weigh more heavily on me than they seemed to do on Wesley. I know that I don't have his giftedness and that I am too sensitive to what other people think.

But somehow, deep down, this is still what I would like to live for – to see disciples made who will live justly and walk humbly with God.

#### 9.6.2 Western modified existentialist – prosperity and work ethic

Alongside these Wesleyan reasons for being is my desire to be happy and comfortable. There is my desire to succeed and achieve. In one period of my life I was a computer programmer able to make computers do anything one could think of. I got a big kick out of those achievements.

I save money and plan for the future. I make sacrifices for my children so that they can have a better education so they can have choices about what they do in life. While I have priorities above making money, money is a good thing to have and I enjoy owning a house and living in it.

I enjoy stretching myself intellectually and sometimes truth for the sake of truth is fun. But it's ok when I don't understand what my children are talking about because they have studied in areas I could not even dream of getting to grips with.

*“Yes – did you know that elementary particles have charm! And colour – how can a subatomic particle have colour?” illustrated Carol.*

I understand the appeal of socialism, but I generally believe that capitalism is a more realistic economic system. I believe that it can be made to work for the benefit of all. This might be because I have benefited from it. It is hard to tell. I want to see other people prosper financially and materially. I believe that there is enough in the economy, in the world, for everyone. I get frustrated when I perceive people to be making themselves poor. I get frustrated when people ask for handouts. I believe in having a solid work ethic.

*“How does that fit with what Paul has been saying?” asked Carol.*

This isn't always consistent with obedience by faith. There are times when I need to give up my comfort and goals in favour of what I believe to be what God is

telling me to do, or what I believe to be right within my Christian ethos. Yet a goal-oriented lifestyle can also make it easier to achieve obedience.

*“Just a warning about the blend coming up. We had a look at your computer. We have modified your Twitter timeline a little. Some of the tweets are the originals from 30 September 2016, others have been, well, inserted. Be ready!”*

## 9.7 An Interlude of Thought

*“I’m going to show you something different this time, is that ok?” asked the author.*

*“Sure,” replied the observer, “it’s been good, but we can take a break. What’s up?”*

*“We are reaching a crucial point and I need to you to help me think.”*

*“No problem. What do you want me to do?”*

*“Just listen for the moment if you don’t mind. There is one feature of Conceptual Blending that I haven’t yet taught you. That is the creation of integration networks.”*

*“Integration was one of the three Is, wasn’t it? Please carry on, I’m interested!”*

*“Compression is a very powerful tool, but you can’t just use it in isolation. It needs to be used within a space – perhaps in a story. This space is a network and we map from various input spaces into the network space. This network holds the important relations of the blend. ‘In principle, a conceptual integration network contains its compressions and decompressions.’<sup>750</sup> The experts speak of four types of network;<sup>751</sup> I want to use only two of them. The most basic is the Simplex Network. We can’t get anywhere without it. This creates very simple mapping spaces – such as from people to roles. So family relationships form a network space and Joe and Mary map onto the roles father and daughter (if that is in fact the case). There could be a network containing occupations so that Marjorie maps onto clergyperson. Or Marjorie could map onto white person in another frame of reference. These are so*

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<sup>750</sup> Fauconnier & Turner *Conceptual Blending* p119.

<sup>751</sup> Fauconnier & Turner *Conceptual Blending* p119.



*apparently concrete and every day that we don't always realise that there is a blend involved."*

*"Ok, I've got that so far. I suspect we deal with these blends mostly intuitively."*

*"Well, yes, where we experience them in our daily lives. But let's move on to Mirror Networks, which are the sort of networks that we have been using. In these we take various input spaces and blend them to create an enhanced blended space – a space which shows us something new. An input space might be a white clergyperson thinking about stipends. Another could be a 'coloured' clergyperson thinking about stipends. When we bring them together and have a white and a 'coloured' clergyperson discussing stipends we have a mirror network."*

*"Just like the debate with Kant."*

*"Exactly. Except in our case, the blend was entirely possible to find in real life. If we had written the same story in the midst of an Afrikaner stronghold in the early days of apartheid where the mix was less likely to be found, it would have been a more imaginative blend!"*

*"Our blends so far have been a bit more complex. Are they just combinations and blends of mirror blends?"*

*"Essentially, yes. We have to deal differently with clashes and compressions in various cases, but we have variations on mirror blends. Look at my computer screen here, do you know this?"*

*"It looks like Twitter! Oh, oh. I see it is a blend!"*

*"Wait – let's just have a reminder about how Twitter works, before we read the timeline!"<sup>752</sup>*

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<sup>752</sup> The information in the text box is extracted from the Twitter support page on the web, found at <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585#> accessed 2 October 2016.

### **What is Twitter anyway?**

Twitter is an information network made up of 140-character messages called Tweets. It's an easy way to discover the latest news related to subjects you care about.

### **How is it useful?**

Twitter contains information you will find valuable. Messages from users you choose to follow will show up on your home page for you to read. It's like being delivered a newspaper whose headlines you'll always find interesting – you can discover news as it's happening, learn more about topics that are important to you, and get the inside scoop in real time.

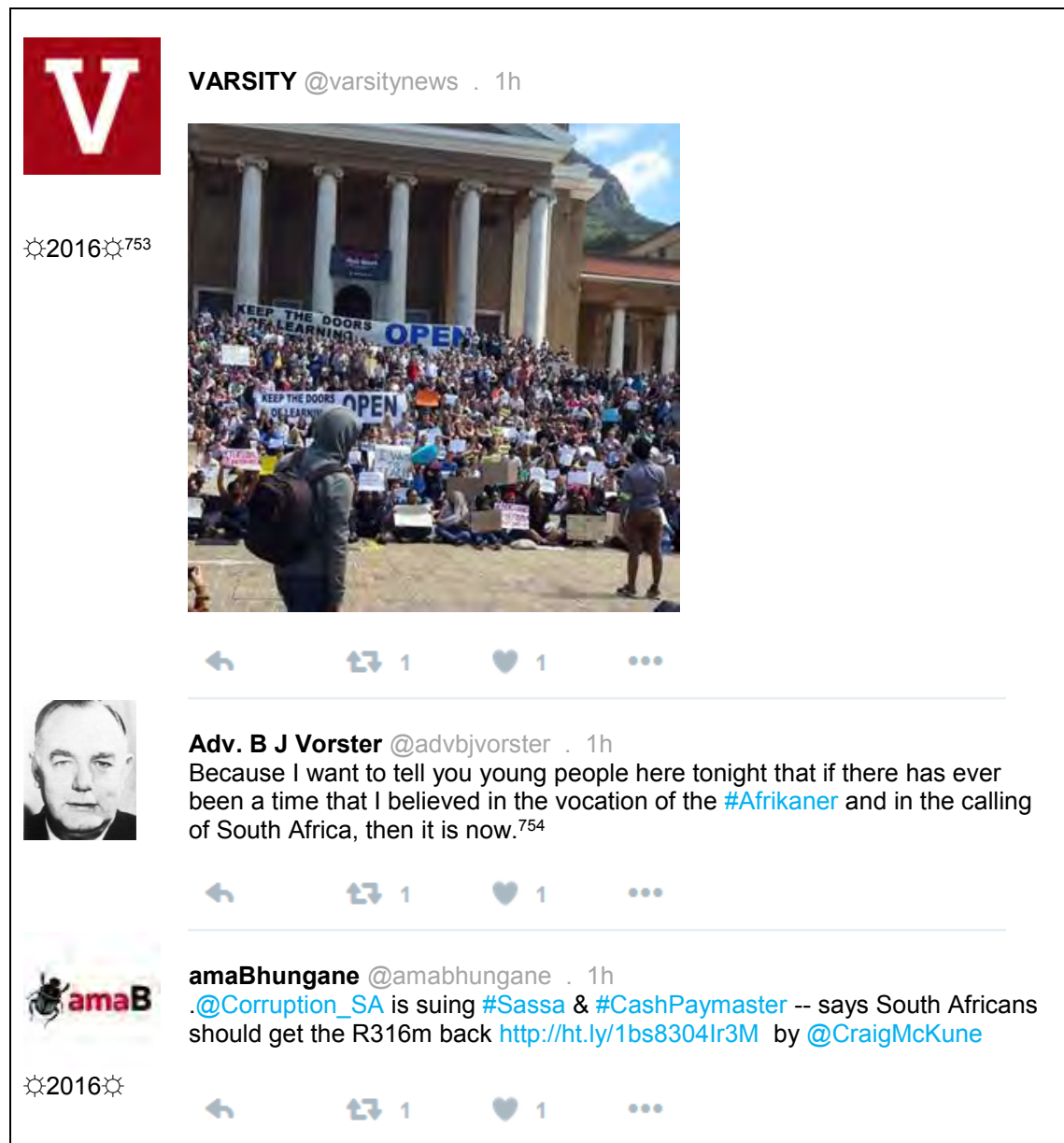
#### **1. DISCOVER SOURCES: Find and follow others**

It's best to begin your journey by finding and following other interesting Twitter accounts. Look for businesses you love, public service accounts, people you know, celebrities, or news sources you read.

#### **2. CHECK YOUR TIMELINE: See what's happening**

Messages from those you follow will show up in a readable stream on your Twitter homepage, called your "Timeline." Once you've followed a few people, news outlets, organizations, or accounts of your interest, you'll have a new page of information to read each time you log in. Click links in others' Tweets to view articles, images or videos they've linked to. Click hashtagged keywords (#) to view all Tweets about that topic.

“Have you got it? Let’s see our timeline.”



<sup>753</sup> This mark occurs whenever the tweet comes from the author’s own Twitter timeline from 30 September 2016.

<sup>754</sup> All quotes from B.J. Vorster are from a speech during a rally of the East Rand Rapportryers on 14 November 1974, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/speech-during-rally-east-rand-rapportryers-14-november-1974>.



**Tacitus** @therealTacitus · 1h

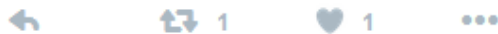
The source of the name was [#Christus](#), on whom during the command of [#Tiberius](#), reprisal had been inflicted by the procurator [@PontiusPilatus](#).<sup>755</sup>



**VARSAITY** @varsitynews · 1h

Bremner Protesters have made their way to Jammie Plaza to disrupt [#UCTOpen](#) silent protest

☀️2016☀️



**Paul** @SaulofTarsus · 1h

Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.<sup>756</sup> [#LTTR](#)<sup>757</sup>



**VARSAITY Retweeted**

**LifeOfPri** @Priyanka101 · 1h

"We want UCT to open... But not just for the privileged!" [#UCTShutdown](#) [#UCTMassMeeting](#)

☀️2016☀️



<sup>755</sup> Quoted in Mellor, Ronald *Tacitus' Annals* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010 p57.

<sup>756</sup> Romans 2:25.

<sup>757</sup> Letter To The Romans.



**Flavius Josephus** @yosefbenmattityahu · 1h

Circumcision is the mark of the Judean male because it has been ordained by God.<sup>758</sup> #JewGen



**ISASA Jobs** @ISASAJobs · 1h

Aftercare Teacher. Auburn House Montessori School. Kenilworth, Cape Town. <http://www.isasa.org/vacancies/listing/aftercare-teacher-1> ... #educationjobs #JobSeekersSA

☀2016☀



**Paul** @SaulofTarsus · 1h

So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?<sup>759</sup> #LTTR



**Dr Paul Coxon** @paulcoxon · 1h

Rosetta is (was) the 1st deep space mission to fully rely on solar power beyond the main asteroid belt <https://directory.eoportal.org/web/eoportal/satellite-missions/r/rosetta> ... #CometLanding

☀2016☀



**Adv. B J Vorster** @advbjvorster · 1h

The future probably looks dark, it looks unpredictable, it looks ugly to you. In spite of this I want to tell you that if this nation had to perish, it would have perished long ago. However this nation has a vocation to fulfil, not only in South Africa, but in Africa.



<sup>758</sup> From the notes on Josephus, Flavius *Life of Josephus* (trans. & ed. Steve Mason) Leiden: Brill, 2003 p75.

<sup>759</sup> Romans 2:26.



**Max Planck Society** @maxplanckpress · 1h  
 \*sniff\*! [[@tomgauld](#) for [@newscientist](#)] #cometlanding [@ESA\\_Rosetta](#)

☀2016☀



🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Tacitus** @therealTacitus · 1h  
 Though the baleful superstition had been stifled for the moment, there was now another outbreak.

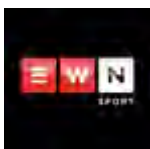
🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Sarah Wild** @sarahemilywild · 1h  
 At [@ftfa](#) event, hearing about [@ClothesToGood](#): an org that facilitates upcycling and reselling of clothes in townships. That's pretty cool.

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**EWN Sport** @EWNSport · 1h  
[#SAvAUS](#) Good afternoon, we're at Supersport Park for the clash between the Proteas and Australia.

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Daniel Boyarin** @dboyarin · 1h  
 It is not a claim that God has rejected the Jews because they were inadequate in some sense or another, not an assertion that their keeping of the law was a striving against God!<sup>760</sup> [#JewGen](#)

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮

<sup>760</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew* p156.



**Helen Zille** @helenzille · 1h

Fantastic feeling to hold the first copy hot off the press, in my hand. Thanks so much @PenguinBooksSA



☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Scapegoat Retweeted**

**Max du Preez** @MaxduPreez · 1h

Americans say things differently. 'Gas' for 'petrol', 'elevator' for 'lift', 'presidential candidate' for 'racist, sexist swine'

☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Son of God** @Nerotheonly · 1h

Dreaming of #Poppaea<sup>761</sup>...

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**AndrewKColes** @andrewkcoles · 1h

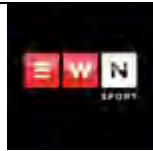
Emotional intelligence will change the way you view yourself, others, and the way you go about your work. -Travis Bradberry #GLS16

☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮

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<sup>761</sup> A woman who became his mistress and later his wife. Green, Bernard *Christianity in Ancient Rome* p15.



**EWN Sport** @EWNSport · 1h

#SAvAUS Aaron Finch and David Warner take to the crease to open the batting for Australia. Dale Steyn to open the bowling for SA. Go time!

☀2016☀



**Neil Elliott** @notneilhimsel · 1h

We should detect essentialist thinking in the assumption that the Christian apocalypse was fundamentally incompatible with continued devotion ... to the law.<sup>762</sup> #JewGen



**SteveBikoFoundation** @bikofoundation · 1h

#TodayInHistory - 1966: Botswana gained its independence from Britain. Happy Independence Day.

☀2016☀



**City of Cape Town** @CityofCT · 1h

Over 155 FreeCall lines have been set up in City facilities. See which areas: <http://bit.ly/25RrKrF>

☀2016☀



**Paul** @SaulofTarsus · 1h

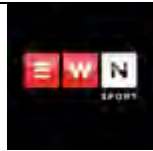
Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.<sup>763</sup> #LTTR



<sup>762</sup> Elliott, Neil "The Question of Politics" p217.

<sup>763</sup> Romans 2:27.





**EWN Sport** @EWNSport . 1h  
[#SAvAUS](#) Ouch! Warner doesn't let Rabada settle, he takes 8 off his first two balls. Back-to-back boundaries

☀2016☀



**AndrewKcoles** @andrewkcoles . 1h  
 I.Q. measures the rate at which you process information. -Travis Bradberry  
[#GLS16](#)

☀2016☀



**Flavius Josephus** @yosefbenmattityahu . 1h  
 Circumcision is the proper transitional rite for a male converting to Judaism. But why convert?<sup>764</sup> [#JewGen](#)



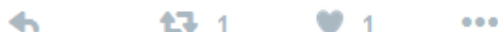
**AndrewKcoles** @andrewkcoles . 1h  
 Self Awareness: is the ability to accurately recognize your emotions. -Travis Bradberry [#GLS16](#)

☀2016☀



**AndrewKcoles** @andrewkcoles . 1h  
 Not getting enough sleep makes you FAT!! -Travis Bradberry [#GLS16](#)

☀2016☀

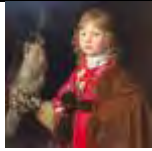


**Mark Nanos** @marknanos . 1h  
 Paul opposed Christ-following non-Jews becoming Jews<sup>765</sup> [#JewGen](#)



<sup>764</sup> Josephus, Flavius *Life of Josephus* p75.

<sup>765</sup> Nanos, Mark "The Question of Conceptualisation" p106.



James Gleick Retweeted

**Thomas Levenson** @TomLevenson · 5h

Me on @JamesGleick's new Time Travel.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2016/09/29/james-gleick-looks-history-physics-time-travel/r3v7fbkofwB6byusbtFYGO/story.html> ... Shorter: it's great. Go read it.

☀2016☀



James Gleick looks at history, physics of time travel - The Boston ...

The author leads us on a thoroughly thrilling journey of ideas in "Time Travel."

[bostonglobe.com](https://www.bostonglobe.com)

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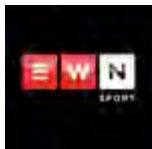
UCT Student Retweeted

**Jenna Bruwer** @jennabruwer · 1h

Correct me if I'm wrong but these are all students with privilege that can actually afford to go to university???

☀2016☀

👤 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**EWN Sport** @EWNSport · 1h

#SAvAUS Warner & Finch bring up their 50 run partnership. Warner has been the aggressor so far in these innings. 51/0

☀2016☀

👤 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Rabbi Hillel** @RabbiHillel · 1h

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole [#Torah](#), all the rest is commentary. Go and Learn.<sup>766</sup>

**A Pagan** @justapagan

@RabbiShammai @RabbiHillel Convert me on condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I am standing on one foot.

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Reggie Nel** Retweeted

**Michael Jordaan** @michaeljordaan · Sep 24

2016 Budget allocated R52 billion for Defense and R28 billion for Universities. Zero fee increase is easily possible if we reprioritise.

☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Physics World** Retweeted

**ESA Rosetta Mission** @ESA\_Rosetta · 1h

Mission complete [#CometLanding](#)

☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Adv. B J Vorster** @advbjvorster · 1h

Our multiracial policy of [#separate](#) [#development](#) can be sold to Africa and it can be made acceptable to Africa. And I want to assure you that it shall be made acceptable to Africa.

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**SteveBikoFoundation** @bikofoundation · 1h

"White power presents itself as a totality not only provoking us but also controlling our response to the provocation" - Steve Biko

☀️2016☀️

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮

<sup>766</sup> Quoted in Neusner, Jacob *Judaism and Story: The Evidence of The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 p124.



**Ken Schenck** @kenschenk · 1h  
 "Sometimes we need doubts to help us shed false images of God." Amanda Drury

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Tacitus** @therealTacitus · 1h  
 Not only across Judaea, the origin of the malignancy, but also across the City.

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Scapegoat** @AndiMakinana · 1h  
 Minister Nzimande doesn't look like the Mr Nzimande we know...

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**The Witness** @WitnessKZN · 1h  
[#UKZN](#) arrested students to remain in custody till 10 October as Magistrate Boikhutso wants to view video footage before making her decision.

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Paul** @SaulofTarsus · 1h  
 For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical.<sup>767</sup> [#LTTR](#)

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**Zakes Mda** @zakesmda · 1h  
 Mantashe and militant student protesters agree on university shutdowns, but this is the last thing Africa needs

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮



**SteveBikoFoundation** @bikofoundation · 1h  
 "While we progressively lose ourselves in a world of colourlessness and amorphous common humanity, whites are deriving pleasure"- Steve Biko

☀2016☀

🔄 1 ❤️ 1 ⋮

<sup>767</sup> Romans 2:28.



**Daniel Boyarin** @dboyarin · 1h

The Jews as a concrete signifier of the fulfilled spiritual signified, the body of Christ, the Church, had simply outlived their usefulness.<sup>768</sup> #JewGen



**Sowetan LIVE** @SowetanLIVE · 1h

Royalty to meet Zuma about freeing King Dalindyebo <http://bit.ly/2cG2bri>



☀2016☀



**SteveBikoFoundation** @bikofoundation · 1h

"The system has allowed so dangerous an anti-Black attitude to build up amongst whites that it is taken as almost a sin to be Black"- S Biko

☀2016☀



**Adv. B J Vorster** @advbjvorster · 1h

The Lord never places responsibilities on people who cannot bear them and we were given broad shoulders because the Lord knew in His mercy which problems we would meet with in Africa. It is our heritage; we have to bear it, we can bear it, and I believe we shall bear it.



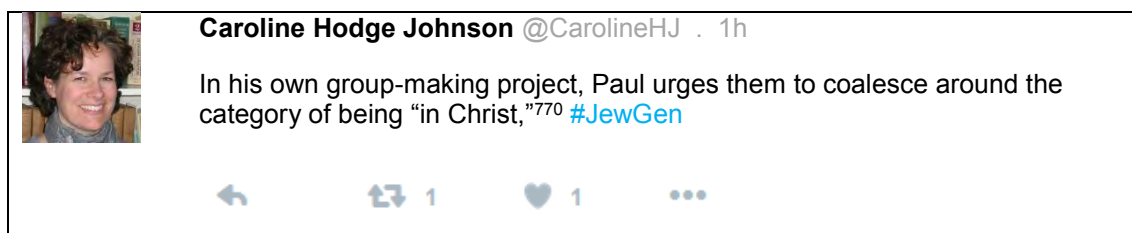
**Mark Nanos** @marknanos · 1h

Paul's arguments continue to be read as if he was expounding a universal rule applicable to Jews as well as non-Jews, Christ-followers or not, as if he opposed circumcision for everyone<sup>769</sup> #JewGen



<sup>768</sup> Boyarin, Daniel *A Radical Jew* p156.

<sup>769</sup> Nanos, Mark "The Question of Conceptualisation" p107.



## 9.8 Critical Analysis

### 9.8.1 The blend

In some of the blends, I struggled to give even treatment to the past and the present. I am much more confident in my knowledge of recent history and my ability to create real characters from the South African context. I looked for other ways to achieve human scale and acknowledge the question of diversity. In many ways, a social media timeline was the ideal solution. In this particular chapter, we were looking at what people see as ‘good’ or behaviour to be desired and much of what people put on Twitter is an indication of their values and ideals. I was worried that this would be very contrived and nothing could be learnt except that which I explicitly put there, but it did gain a life of its own and it did evolve, just in a different way.

Because each tweet is very short and interspersed with other tweets, context is not always apparent. Hashtags help with this, but if one has not been alert to each successive tweet, it can be difficult to make sense of the flow of thought. This blend has voices from the past interspersed with tweets from a contemporary timeline. The past tweets were distributed evenly, but to all intents randomly in the flow.

This has resulted in the first blend that genuinely reflects the form of a web insofar as it is not linear. It is also static and the timeline here is like a snapshot or a painting. There emerge the plans and intentions of the creator, but also interesting juxtapositions and arrangements which could be called accidents of design. Now, rather than analysing change or movement, we need to analyse grouping and find other ways to cope with nonlinearity.

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<sup>770</sup> Hodge, Caroline Johnson “The Question of Identity” p172.

Almost subversively, the autobiographical element is at play here because the contemporary timeline is culled from my own and so my interests, if not my opinions, are reflected in the contemporary tweets.

Looking at groupings, we see some interesting juxtapositions – such as the references to Helen Zille (premier of the South African province of the Western Cape), Donald Trump (an oblique reference to then presidential candidate in the USA, now, in 2017, president) and Nero (a Roman emperor). Helen Zille is celebrating the publishing of her book and is thus promoting herself. The tweet regarding Donald Trump is by a journalist hoping to shame him for what he considers immoral behaviour. The Nero tweet is invented and refers to one of his love interests. We would regard Nero to have been self-promoting, immoral and shameless. These tweets put something of a human face to these descriptions. Is self-promotion in itself evil? Does the Helen Zille tweet suggest an evil premier? This is obviously subjective, but forces us to face our prejudices to some extent. We can imagine first century equivalents of Max du Preez (the journalist tweeting) castigating Nero for his behaviour. How we respond to this may depend on how we feel about Donald Trump and having nothing to do with Nero. I would suggest that these tweets all operate within the honour and shame framework, without reference to either righteousness or obedience of faith. The next tweet is from someone attending a Christian conference. He quotes, “Emotional intelligence will change the way you view yourself, others, and the way you go about your work.” He seems to speak directly into the honour and shame paradigm suggested by the various tweets. Obviously, this does not become true just because it suits our random juxtaposition, but it shows a contemporary resistance to honour and shame, even though it is prevalent. There is a resonance with this idea and we begin to wonder about Nero and emotional intelligence. What about Paul? This suggests something that we could explore further.

Seeing tweets supposedly by B.J. Vorster (Afrikaner apartheid champion) alongside tweets from contemporary South African Universities and tweets quoting Steve Biko presented some irony. We look in particular at this sequence with Vorster and Biko (I have copied the tweets directly from the timeline for ease of reference):

B.J.Vorster: Our multiracial policy of separate development can be sold to Africa and it can be made acceptable to Africa. And I want to assure you that it shall be made acceptable to Africa.

Steve Biko Foundation: "White power presents itself as a totality not only provoking us but also controlling our response to the provocation" - Steve Biko

Ken Schenck: "Sometimes we need doubts to help us shed false images of God." Amanda Drury

Tacitus: Not only across Judaea, the origin of the malignancy, but also across the City.

We see here from the quotes from Vorster and Tacitus the expansionary intention or nature of white people and of first century Judaism. The Biko quote illustrates a generalised reaction to apartheid. He shows helplessness, but also resentment – perhaps the same reactions as shown by Tacitus to the Jews? These are three quotes showing the conviction of their authors. Into this, randomly, comes biblical scholar Ken Schenck, probably quoting a sermon, expressing the need for doubt. If he had used other words he might have said to the groups represented or implied in the tweets – shed some ideo-theological baggage, practise some suspension of disbelief. Did Paul encourage doubt? How did he deal with that sort of totalitarianism? Again, this puts a human face onto Paul's audience. They were not Biko or Vorster, but there is something that resonates that helps us understand why Paul was careful in his wording.

I briefly mention other areas that could be explored further.

The comments from the scholars discussing what was required of Jews and Gentiles when they began to follow Christ seemed sometimes to relate to the conflicts expressed in the various South African situations. Could all groups "coalesce around the category of being 'in Christ'" as suggested by Caroline Johnson Hodge?

The article about King Dalinyebo reminds me that African traditional culture is still a role player in defining African thought – not only subconsciously like one of the ghosts of the previous blend, but as an explicit part of the contemporary African life and belief.



Mocking and shame are very much features of the comments on social media. Those who survive are most often those who learn to ignore it. Paul, in his setting, was not in a position to ignore it, but he would appear to have transformed it, or contrived to use any sense of disgrace to his own ends. This is difficult to do on social media, with words being endlessly twisted and falsified. Either Paul's opponents were less sophisticated or Paul was a master of words.

Hearing different voices offering their opinions on the Twitter timeline, I am also challenged by seeing how many different interpretations there are of what is good and what is right. The obedience of faith that Paul is looking for may be hard to come by. Voices clamour to be heard, saying their group is right and they have the truth. This is where Paul must also have found himself. In order to be heard and remembered amongst all the noise he would have to present his case well.

#### 9.8.2 The Text

Paul's words 'the obedience of faith' may be easily interpreted as obedience to God that rises out of faith in God. Exactly what behaviour or actions this obedience would require is not explicit in these words, but we understand it to be a framework within which God and people may operate. In this case the voices to which we have listened provide alternatives to this obedience – we might say that they offer competing value systems or narratives. At first glance, these value systems vary greatly, but on closer examination there are three categories which are distinct from Paul's obedience of faith. Of course, there may be more, but these arise from the contribution of each voice here.

The first value system is honour and shame. Like 'obedience of faith', this is a framework where the content is created within each culture. The Graeco-Roman people had a highly developed sense of honour and shame and it is also seen in the Jewish and African traditional cultures. Because this culture is intrinsic to Paul's context he had little choice but to work within it. He, however, subverted it and used it to legitimise the gospel in the context – for example, where he says he is not ashamed (averting claims of shame) of the gospel for it is the power (claiming honour) of God.

The second value system is nationalism. This is heard in the Jewish and Afrikaner voices. It is also present in Black Consciousness, although that may not

have been the intention of those who developed it. Paul rejected the Jews claiming a special place for their nationality and we see that he opposed this sort of nationalism. Both Jewish (in the years before Christ) and Afrikaner nations descended into bloody attempts to hold onto to their positions within society. We see warning signs of this happening in South Africa today as xenophobia rears its head.

The third value system entails obedience to, or veneration of, something other than God. We find this in the African traditional veneration of the living dead. The Greeks and Romans had other gods which they worshipped. The Jews with their attachment to the Law might even fit in this category. Black Consciousness might also fit here insofar as the dignity and freedom of the black person is the primary concern to which all else should be subservient.

There are also value systems which are supportive of Paul's obedience of faith. The Jewish righteousness by faith when seen as relational and as part of the people covenant relationship with God may not be much different to the obedience of faith. There is also common ground with those who seek honour by well-doing.

There may also be conflicts between the value systems of one people. If we look at the thread on circumcision in the blend we see tension between circumcision as a mark of the nation and circumcision as a product of righteousness by faith. What happens when circumcision is no longer expected by the latter, but is still demanded by the former?

Against this backdrop, Paul hopes to recommend his obedience of faith. This is unacceptable in the honour and shame culture because of the dislike of obedience. It may be unacceptable to the other two categories because of its requirement for faith in God which displaces faith in nation or other object of attachment. For many though, there would be resonances with what they already believe to be good and right.

## CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

*“So that is Conceptual Blending!” exclaimed the hidden observer. “I have to admit that the narratives have helped me enter the text in a new way. I was a little dubious at the beginning, but I cannot deny that the African element – as also the human element – has challenged my understanding.”*

*“And has it changed you? Do you see transformative praxis?” asked the author.*

### **10.1 Reading ourselves in the light of the text**

*“I see the potential for that. I need to give some more consideration to the blends, but yes, I can see that it should lead to change.”*

*The author and the hidden observer walked across the now deserted room. The Conceptual Blending team had packed up and left and the area was now revealed to be a whole floor of an office block. Here and there were partitions forming offices, but vast spaces were bare except for hardwearing carpet tiles and disconnected wires coming from wall sockets. The wall at the end of the room had no windows and seemed to be partly covered by a rope structure which extended across the corner.*

*“Well, there it is,” said the author, “the web which we have been weaving. It has been some intense effort,” – here the brow was mopped theatrically – “but I think it is a good web.”*

*“This is fascinating!” exclaimed the observer. “There are words sewn – or woven – into each strand of rope with some sort of shiny thread. Look at the ropes which are anchored to the walls and floor, what do the words say?”*

*“I’m sure you can guess,” answered the author. “This one says ‘slave’. Over there is ‘called apostle set apart’ and the next one along is ‘gospel.’”*

*“The words of the letter. Of course! Here touching the floor is ‘promised beforehand’ and that one must be ‘obedience of faith.’ Yes it is,” he declared having moved closer to read the words. “I see that the Greek is also there. I guess this is isiXhosa – is that Afrikaans?”*

*“Yes, and there seem to be other languages too! I think the web itself is hinting for more,” the author smiled at the thought.*

*“No, no, enough! Maybe later. But look at the other threads – they are not really tangled at all. Some go across, some go up and down, like a real spider’s web.”*

*“Every thread has its word. Look at ‘obedience’ it goes quite a distance.”*

*“I remember, that came in early on in the thesis with ‘slave’ and culminated with its own chapter. Yes, I see how the rope shows just that.”*

*“The ‘slave’ rope also has links to ‘familia’, ‘servant’, ‘son’, ‘ukukhonza’ and all those different Greek words for servant.”*

*“On the other side there is ‘poor white’ and ‘docile zombies.’”*

*“And ‘tea girl.’ Did we really have ‘tea girl’? I think you have a bug in your web.”<sup>771</sup>*

*“It is there – go and have another look at chapter five. Look - you can see that there is rope labelled ‘Jesus Christ’ which comes to a neat end here. You might remember that we were unable to pursue those words in detail in the thesis.”*

*“Ah that would explain why there are big gaps around the ‘gospel’ rope. That is where we left out quite a bit. Those parts where Paul was probably quoting something written previously.”*

*“It was a pity to leave those out,” said the author, “but let’s focus on what we do have.”*

*“There is something odd about this web,” said the observer, squinting as if trying to catch something out of the corner of his eye. “Some parts seem to come and go. Some ropes seem very strong and sturdy, though. What is that all about?”*

*“Ah, that is quite important. I experience the same thing, but I suspect that different ropes fade in and out for me. You see the thick ropes (that I see) are where my ideo-theological biases reinforce the web. So ‘set apart’ is strong and so is*

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<sup>771</sup> No pun intended.

*‘company of the called’. That last is an idea that appealed to me. ‘Called holy ones’ and ‘purposely called’ are subsequently also strong.”*

*“And the fading ropes?”*

*“Those ropes are the ones where we have to make an effort to ‘willingly suspend disbelief.’ This one labelled ‘sangoma’ and that one, ‘jogi’, are very difficult for me to see. If I concentrate hard they come into focus.”*

*“Because you are not really convinced that they are true or real or relevant? I guess that’s why ‘Afrikaner mission to civilise’ is hard to see for me. I am not comfortable with idea of an individual nation claiming privilege.”*

*“Whether we like those strands or not, they are in the web. If we were to cut them out the whole thing would become deformed. This is where we face the fact that none of us knows the whole of truth or have the ultimate handle on meaning.”*

*“But this web helps. We are getting closer. What is this strand that says ‘propaganda?’ That must lead to something from the apartheid government.” The observer followed the rope with his eye. “No, it actually links to ‘gospel.’”*

*“Remember that the Romans may have used the word or a variation to mean all the ‘good news’ that flowed from the emperor’s palace. That’s why the South African words ‘suspicion’ and ‘oppression’ lead here – because many weren’t sure if the gospel was true or just government propaganda. Yet ‘gospel’ also links to ‘freedom’ and ‘triumphant.’”*

*“And here in a South African part are ‘ancestors’ and ‘pseudo-gospel’. This whole area around the ‘gospel’ rope looks more robust – even with all the gaps. As if ‘gospel’ somehow provides a crisis point. Or is that just my ideo-theological bias speaking?”*

*The author sighed. “It is hard to tell, isn’t it?”*

*As they stood looking at the web they heard people approaching. They turned to see a group of seven women. Three of them were wearing unusual clothing – perhaps from the first century.*

*“Oh, hello,” said the author. “I thought the Conceptual Blending team had all gone. Did you decide to stay a little longer?”*

*"We are not part of the team we were attending a workshop," said Thembi.*

*"It was fascinating setting up the blends and seeing what resulted," said Junia.  
"We have learnt so much!"*

*"Do you mean that you are real?" The author took a step back. "Oh dear, that sounds rude, but are you not actors?"*

*"No," laughed Carol, "we are three people from first century Rome and four from contemporary South Africa. Though all of us from South Africa are well-acquainted with the apartheid era."*

*"Some of us more than others," agreed Thando with a sad look.*

*"We were thrown into the deep end, I must admit," explained Junia, "but once we figured out what was going on, it was great. We saw you working with Tri-Polar theory and Intercontextual theory and we realised that we were supposed to live it out."*

*"I will be going back to Rome and telling everyone what I have learnt. Now I know that it is possible to have communities with no slaves at all. I don't think we Christians should continue having slaves – I foresee many manumissions," said Phoebe.*

*The author was excited, though also a little concerned. "I don't think one is supposed to change the past, please be careful."*

*"We will be," Phoebe laughed. "You must also be careful not to change the past by trying so hard to understand the present and the future," she teased.*

*"You are right. We tend to change the past in our imaginations as we attempt to make sense of things! But I do want to know what you learned. Was the process helpful? What about those of you from this time – did it help?"*

*"Oh yes," said Thembi, "just as Phoebe said we have learnt from each other. As the Romans could only imagine life with slavery I need to be careful not to imagine only life with oppression. I studied Paulo Freire once and I never properly understood what he said about the danger of the oppressed becoming the oppressor.<sup>772</sup> Seeing the Romans struggle with it has helped. Also Paul's liberating*

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<sup>772</sup> Freire, Paulo *Pedagogy* p44.

*use of the concept of slave has helped me. Freedom doesn't come from turning things around – it comes from transforming them, renegotiating them perhaps. This rope here – you see how it shows that movement from slave of Caesar to slave of sin to slave of Jesus to child of God. That has really come home to me – and I am able to reconcile it with my Black Consciousness convictions.”*

*Elmarie had been very quiet, but now she spoke up. “I have been very embarrassed as an Afrikaner and while I want to deny my past, I know that I can't. I have taken Paul's words about lost privilege to heart. I'm not sure if I have ever been cut off the olive bush, but I will do all that I can to be grafted back in if so. I see now that the obedience of faith that Paul talks about is not so much laws and duty as faithfulness to my contract with God – or in other words a determination that the graft will take and grow. To be honest, I worried about the Intertextual part of this – not the part we played, the voices, that was great – but taking things word by word. Context is so important. But that word 'call' challenged me. Paul had such a great call – like the Afrikaner people took for themselves – but Paul's sense of call was to involve others in the call. This strand of the rope that has 'company of the called' woven into it reminds me that whenever I seem to be privileged I should be using it to draw others in.”*

*“Thanks Elmarie,” the author interrupted gently, worried that a sermon was about to be preached. “I see that you have embraced the level one detail and the level three conceptual parts of the Intertextual Method. Even more than that I see that it has naturally led to what Voelz said it would – reading ourselves in the light of the text as well as reading the text in the light of ourselves.”<sup>773</sup>*

*“I am beginning to understand,” said the hidden observer, “how the method has worked. The one that was described when we started. The two contexts, African and original, formed two of the poles of Tri-Polar theory and the contexts of Intercontextual theory. And these, of course, were to form the input spaces into the Conceptual Blends. First, we wove more and more strands into web using the Intertextual Method. Out of our web, the stories came into being. How did everyone experience the blending process?”*

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<sup>773</sup> Voelz, James “Multiple Signs” p156.

## 10.2 Building Blends

*“It was fun!” chorused the seven women.*

*“We really did enjoy the stories,” said Miriam, “but they were sometimes a bit difficult to get started.”*

*“Yes, we eventually just had a rule that we were not to keep second-guessing ourselves and being critical. When we tried to adhere rigorously to the thoughts that arose out of the intertextual conversation the blends became stilted and contrived – and we didn’t let you see those attempts!” said Thando.*

*“Except perhaps the first one or two,” admitted Thembi. “When we just let them flow, each of our contributions seemed to add impact and we all learnt from them. In fact, the imperfections helped because they became discussion points. We had some very good discussions. We also enjoyed your comments,” she said kindly to the author.*

*“Thank you,” said the author absently. “The first two blends were a bit rough – you noticed it, didn’t you?”*

*The hidden observer nodded, “yes, and I pulled that lever to get things moving.”*

*“Of course, we were still learning about blending. Those initial blends guided our discussion around the three Is – Identity, Imagination and Integration. But they also allowed us to start dealing with the concept of slave and of calling. If I remember correctly, you seven workshopped the ideas.”*

*“That’s right,” said Miriam. “It took us a moment to move out of an academic mode and to find the humanity in the situation. I guess ‘localised meaning’ and ‘transformational praxis’ only have any value when they are brought into the sphere of human experience. Slave is not by any means an emotionally neutral word. Paul must have known he was bringing up images of passion for some and images of mindless drudgery for others. The passion might have been out of love for a master, but it was more likely to be resentment or anger. ”*

*“We struggled with the ideas of identity. Remember ‘I am Paul’, ‘you are Paul’ and so on?” added Carol.*



*“We’ve moved on a bit since then! The next words were ‘called, apostle, set apart.’ At that point, we wrestled with ideas of privilege. I was struck by the responsibilities that go along with privilege,” said Junia.*

*“It was a poignant moment, actually. We were already starting to read ourselves in the light of scripture. I’m glad the focus moved away from us after that,” said Elmarie.*

*“You moved to thinking about contemporary people who might have been something like Paul – in terms of call and privilege. That set you thinking about Christian celebrities. I found that a helpful insight. It was also good to be aware that ‘call’ means different things in different cultures,” said the author. “After that the blends became a little more sophisticated. It was necessary that more tension be included and that my own confused thoughts be minimised. How did you do the set up for ‘gospel’?”*

*“We moved the location in time and space to the struggle era in South Africa. The canteen setting was suggested by the workshop we were having. We were challenged by the intertextual readings to consider the struggles of the different people – the things from which they needed to be saved. We couldn’t do justice to all of them, but the Afrikaner protecting herself, keeping herself separate was there.”*

*“The black oppressed were there – the one who was servile and the one who was awake to and angry about his oppression.”*

*“The Mediterranean folk featured in an unexpected way, when we put it together. Rather than highlighting their struggle or salvation, the blend highlighted their differences – from each other and from the South African people.”*

*“That was because we took away the language compression?” suggested the author.*

*“Yes. After that, the story just played out. There was friction, anger, fear, all born out of the individuals’ own need for their particular salvation – or gospel.”*

*“You resolved the tension by bringing in the cross – symbolising Jesus – or the Christian gospel of which Paul was speaking,” suggested the author.*

*“That is what we hoped – but as much as it united it divided. The cross was a common symbol of hope for the South Africans, but it caused fear in those from the first century.”*

*“I imagine that this blend led to a good discussion?” asked the author.*

*“It did. Gospel can be understood in ways that are specific to a context – and maybe should never be considered finished or complete. I don’t think we are finished with our discussions either!”*

*“This led onto the idea that the gospel was promised beforehand and the intertextual study took us into the area of our different pasts. The Conceptual Blending suggested the idea of ghosts – from the pronghorn blend that we read about. We are not sure that this worked as effectively as it should have – but even that generated discussion and so it was useful.”*

*“What went wrong?” asked the author.*

*“We think that it was trying to guess the thoughts and motivations of other people. Actions are visible and become predictable with time. We don’t really know the deep thoughts of many people. The conversation amongst the clergy came across as pained.”*

*“Of course, it was a painful conversation – they were so obviously trying not to step on each other’s toes. It could be that it was a better reflection than we think. The protest outside the window was painful in a different way.”*

*“We all identified with that – Jew, Greek, Black and White. The first century had crosses while this age has rubber bullets and tear gas – but there is something viscerally the same in our experiences. It gave urgency to our work.”*

*“This was the first blend that allowed the autobiographical element to intrude more overtly, but it also then became more complex as we dealt with more input spaces,” said the author. “I think there were gaps that could have been filled and that the ghosts of the first century people could have been better developed.”*

*“Yes, we were left unsure about what it really said about Paul and his world. How did the protests reflect the former time?”*

*“The last blend was the Twitter timeline. That was inspired by the blend called ‘the conversation with Kant’. This was a contemporary generalisation which allowed many voices to join in the strange asynchronous conversation that happens on Twitter.”*

*“This was in response to the thread on the ‘obedience of faith’?” inquired the author.*

*“Yes. While some tweets are news – such as cricket scores – many are expressions of belief or opinion. This is an ideal forum for determining what a variety of people see as good – or for us - corresponding to Paul’s obedience of faith.”*

*“We chose a couple of themes – circumcision was one. This is specifically relevant because there was disagreement in the first century as to the continued role of circumcision amongst the Christ followers. The other was youth – suggested by the actual contemporary happenings at the universities and also by the speech which was chosen from those of B.J. Vorster.”*

*“I found this overwhelming,” said Miriam. “There were so many different ideas bombarding me and so little context or time to think.”*

*“I am used to Twitter and I like the constant flow of information,” said Carol, “but I think I deal with Miriam’s struggle by letting things simply pass through my surface consciousness. I don’t absorb it or think about it that much.”*

*“The previous two blends engaged our emotions, but the Twitter timeline required some more thought to find meaning. We needed to view it a few times because each time a new thought emerged. Rather than revealing emotion, it tended to reveal our biases.”*

*“This blend also reduced the need for the author to guide the ‘evolutionary growth’ of the blend which meant the autobiographical element was also reduced. This had a very different effect to the other blends.”*

*“The bombardment of ideas helped us to realise that for Paul to introduce a ‘new’ way of achieving ‘goodness’ was quite a challenge.”*

*“Thank you very much for your observations,” said the author.*

*“What do you think about what has happened today?” the hidden observer asked the author.*

*“One of the two goals which we kept in mind was to achieve human scale using Conceptual Blending. I think that was achieved. The other goal was to answer a thematic question which would guide the direction of the blend. I have been thinking about that question,” answered the author.*

### **10.3 Reading the text**

The effectiveness of the technique may be discerned by the quality of the answers that it gave to our questions and by whether it makes any advance on existing techniques of Bible reading or study.

#### **10.3.1 Looking at the appropriation**

The question that we asked was, “How can diverse people live together well?” The essence of the technique is to allow different people to make different interpretations according to their own context, but this study does lead to *an* answer to the question. We can write a sentence for each of the word sets that we studied.

We are able to live together well if we are able to determine an area of commonality and perhaps symbols which we can explore together as Paul did by using the slave thread. We also identify that there is commonality in God’s desire for us which is that we all come to occupy what might be called a privileged position in our relationship with him. This is achieved, for believers, by the power of the gospel of God which transcends all other salvation systems which may exist in our cultures. Nonetheless, we do not need to negate or deny our past lives or our cultures, but are encouraged to see how they may lead into an experience of the gospel and to be kind about the differences we find amongst ourselves. Finally, we acknowledge that a transformation of praxis is required – a sort of goodness, not necessarily by defining rules, but by being in a faithful covenant relationship with Jesus.

These sentences might be written differently by someone with a different ideological bias, but I suspect that they would say essentially the same thing.

### 10.3.2 Looking at the fusing of multiple horizons

This technique uses the strengths of the Tri-Polar and Intercontextual theories in that it honours the possibility of different contextual interpretations and sees that transformative praxis rises out of a conversation between contextual interpretations. Using the Intertextual Method on multiple voices which represent multiple horizons, in Gadamer's and Draper's terminology, makes explicit, as far as is possible, ideological biases and shows us areas where we as readers need to exercise that suspension of disbelief. Conceptual Blending shakes us out of the complacency of the academic discourse and returns us to narrative – which is also the nature of so many parts of scripture. It allows for autobiographical insight – and thus again makes biases evident – in both the setting up and the reading of the blends. The blending also softens the impact of the academic discourse. In the setting up of the blends, the academic voice has a privileged position and is deferred to, but in the blend, it must take its place as one voice amongst many.

We see the effectiveness of the fusion of the voices in the way that it broadened our conceptions of each word of the text. Paul introduces himself as a slave. The different voices led us to see that 'slave' could be understood as being weak, for example, the Jews in Egypt and black people under apartheid. However, it could also be understood as being strong, for example, the *familia* of Jesus and the *umkhonzi* of Shaka. There was the sense of movement from the position of weakness to that of strength as seen in Paul's discourse in Romans 6 and in the coding of Paulo Freire.

Paul also describes himself as called and our perspectives were broadened with different understandings of call from different cultures, realising that Paul's call, while of God, was not isolated from the needs of the world around him. Call may also come from the people as in the case of certain Roman priests and officials. It may come from the ancestors (whether literally or metaphorically) as understood by African *sangomas* or from the cries of the oppressed as experienced by Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement. Paul was an apostle which was one who was sent. The understanding of his sending was expanded to include mediation as seen in the Roman, African and Old Testament cultures. The dangers of being set

apart were highlighted by the Afrikaner and Roman regimes and helped make sense of Paul's insistence on equality and that the believers were also called.

When Paul spoke of gospel, it was not just a message. As suggested by both Jewish and Afrikaner tradition, as well as Black Consciousness, it was a rallying point and an aid to preservation of the community. The Romans with their gospel propaganda promised freedom, justice and salvation, as did Jewish tradition and Black Consciousness which is consistent with what Paul was promising. This gospel was likely to bring conflict with the Roman Emperor as freedom without confrontation was unlikely – as was seen by the Jews leaving Egypt, Africans withstanding demonic forces and black people resisting apartheid.

This conflict would not only be with outsiders, but also amongst believers. Paul explaining that the gospel was promised beforehand indicates unity among them as he believed all cultures were prepared to understand God. This is consistent with what we see in the Jews and the Greeks and to some extent amongst African people. This variety of cultures was also likely to cause conflict because of different understandings due to their different backgrounds. The adherents of Black Consciousness found fault with those who kept the Sabbath but could not treat people with dignity. Both Jews and African people found their pre-Christian practices rejected by other believers. There is also the implicit warning against too close an identification with history, as we might say the Afrikaner had, because Paul does not give his own genealogy.

Paul presents the framework of behaviour which we have labelled 'obedience of faith'. This framework competes with many other value systems, such as nationalism, honour and shame and other objects of worship. Paul's championing of this framework was likely to cause tension and conflict within the competing narratives.

This completes the portion of Romans which we studied and we see the helpful confluence of the different voices. In the same way that there is value in consciously reading from two contexts or horizons, so there is value in reading from multiple horizons which are fused to create a broader and more encompassing horizon or context.

#### **10.4 Limitations and further ideas**

There are many possible options for future research using this technique. It would be interesting to see it used in a group setting with different people from different backgrounds providing the voices. This might have to be done in multiple phases allowing the academic voice to be researched and heard without silencing the local voices from the start.

Acknowledging the ideo-theological biases of the author means that this study could be repeated by people with different cultural background in order to see how the outcome – or the answer to the thematic question – changes.

Limitations are found in that acknowledging our subjectivity does not remove the subjectivity, it just makes us aware of it. This study could have been done in more detail at nearly every step and as soon as material is selected, that selection is done subjectively, because even the criteria for selection will be subjective.

Perhaps the greatest limitation is that for all the many voices described in the thesis, they are all my voice. The goal is to give balance, suspend disbelief, show the whole picture, but at the end of the day as I interpret and I communicate, it is all my voice.

Nonetheless, I believe this is a helpful technique for finding localised meaning and may lead to transformative practice.

#### **10.5 The end**

*“I’m not sure if everyone heard what I said there,” said the author. “You know about it all actually being my voice? It has been good to get to know you, but I’m just trying to warn you – I’m going to flick the master switch now.”*

*The switch was flicked and the author was alone.*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: REFERENCE LIST

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